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The Torment of Aaron Burr #3
The Women He Loved And Destroyed



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had known many men, but none with such worldly charm, none with so near-hypnotic a presence, none with so fascinating an aura of mystery and intrigue. In his arms she was a headstrong young girl again, eager yet afraid.

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Chapter I

Percy Brooks sat in the bus station of Newport, Iowa, nervously waiting for the bus from Chicago to arrive. Elena Blakely should be on it this afternoon. Percy wasn't certain how she would feel actually seeing Elena again, she wasn't certain, either, how Elena felt about seeing her.

So much had happened since they first met nearly a year and a half ago. It hardly seemed it could be that long. That had been Percy's one and only trip to New York, and it was an experience she was not likely to forget. In many ways it seemed more like a lifetime and a half, and in others, only a few months. At that first exposure to each other, there had been a mutual dislike between the two women, as well as suspicion and jealousy of each other. Still, not much more than six months ago, Elena played a significant role in Percy's life, at a time when Percy was completely unaware of what was happening. Only after the danger was past and she was well on her way to recovery, did Gordon dare explain how close she'd come to dying. It was a surprise to learn that Elena was the one who brought her back, literally pulled her back to the land of the living after the doctors who were treating her had all but given up hope for her recovery. Naturally, Percy was grateful. How could she help being grateful to the woman who saved her life? But she remembered none of that on her own; it was a little strange to find yourself being grateful to someone you hadn't liked. And it couldn't have been an easy matter for Elena, she

knew, because Elena first had to overcome her hostility toward Percy before she made the sacrifice of postponing an important trip to fly to South Carolina, where Percy lay in the hospital, and secretly accomplish Percy's recovery.

The doctors thought it was miraculous when Percy showed signs of improvement. No one knew that it was all due to Elena—no one, that is, but Gordon Brooks, and their friends, Sam and Claire White. None of the doctors would have understood. Without waiting to see Percy again, Elena had flown to Italy on an assignment from the Institute of Parapsychology. They had not seen her since, and it was hard to know whether the two women would be starting a fresh new friendship on a more amiable footing or whether they would sink back into the chilly relationship that had been theirs when they first parted in New York.

Percy had been filled with so much anxiety over their meeting that she didn't want to risk being even one second late in meeting the bus; consequently, she had arrived much too early. Now she found that the waiting only added to her nervousness. She noted with irritation that either her watch had begun to run a few minutes slow or the clock on the wall of the bus station was running fast. There was a seven-minute difference between the two timepieces. It didn't really make any difference, she told herself; still, the discrepancy irritated her. Well, it was her own fault. She should have remembered that buses don't run exactly on schedule.

She glanced around, wondering how to occupy her time. The bus depot with its soiled, pale, institutional-green walls was not a particularly cheery place. She decided not to look at the walls. That could be depressing; so she turned her attention to the newly varnished benches which lined them. Then, her gaze continued around the room. In one corner were the ticket windows and the information desk. Behind them were the general offices. On the opposite side of the room, against the wall, were machines for cigarettes and candy. There was also a door which opened into the shop next door, a sort of adjunct to the depot. It was one of those general drugstore and luncheon-

ette combinations which also sold an assortment of newspapers and magazines. So much for the room.

As she looked around again, Percy began noticing the various people seated on the benches. She wondered who they were and decided to make up stories about them—who they were waiting for, where they might be going. The old lady opposite her was probably waiting for her sister, she decided, or maybe a son or daughter. The young couple in the corner might be waiting for the bus to take them to Chicago. The young man leaning against the wall . . . but it was a silly pointless game. She didn't know any of these people, and would probably never see them again. She glanced at her watch and sighed. It was only five minutes since she had looked at it before, and she was disappointed to find how very slowly the time was passing with nothing to do.

She still had several minutes to wait before the bus was even due. Just sitting was becoming unbearable. She needed to move about, to use up some of her nervous energy before she went berserk. Maybe she should take a short walk . . . but that might mean she wouldn't be in the depot when the bus did arrive. Having a cup of coffee in the luncheonette would be better than just sitting.

As she opened the door and headed for the counter, a magazine cover caught her eye. She picked it up and carried it with her to the counter where she sat on one of the high stools. She ordered a mug of icy root beer and began to glance through the pages of the magazine. It was full of women's fashions, and it had been such a long time since she'd had the leisure or desire to look through one. She found it pleasant. The pictures were all heavy sweaters, woolen pants, skirts, and winter suits, while the weather outside was still the customary warm September of the midwest.

Percy found that she was enjoying herself, looking at the photographs. It was something to do, and it was different and pleasant. She was, nonetheless, amused at herself for finding it all so interesting. She had never been preoccupied with fashion. She was one of the lucky ones, one of the people who seem to be born with an instinct for knowing what is right for them. She was also lucky that she managed to look striking in almost anything she put on.

Gordon joked that even a burlap sack would probably fall into just the right shape on Percy. She considered herself a bit conservative since she preferred to stick mostly to simple, classic lines and easy shapes in interesting colors or white . . . lots of white, but never, never black. For some reason she had an aversion to black. Even the black dresses in the magazine didn't have any interest for her. Percy was lucky also because she was almost model thin, tall, and attractive in a natural, unstudied way. And there was an easy elegance about Percy which was the envy of most of her friends.

Looking at the attractive models who filled the pages of the chic magazine, Percy wondered if perhaps she wasn't a bit too plain, if perhaps the time hadn't come for her to start paying more attention to the latest in styles. Some of those pictured were outlandish, of course, and couldn't possibly be intended to survive more than one season. They were the kind of creation that she would tire of quickly. And Gordon would never be seen with me if I tried to wear that, she decided as she studied a pair of white satin knee breeches worn with a chiffon blouse cut low at the neck. Still, even if she would never wear them, it was fun to look.

She had lost track of the time, glancing through the magazine and sipping at her root beer, and she was surprised to hear the voice of the dispatcher on the loud-speaker announce the arrival of the bus from Chicago. She had almost forgotten that was why she was here. Quickly she slipped off the stool, downed the remains of her drink in one gulp. Then, tucking the magazine under her arm, she searched through her purse for her wallet, paid the waitress and walked briskly toward the door of the bus station just as the vehicle pulled to a stop outside. She crossed the room and walked through the door where she could stand on the sidewalk with the few other people who had come to greet the passengers disembarking.

Elena was not among the first passengers who stepped down from the bus, and Percy wondered if something had happened to prevent her making the trip. Percy ran her eyes over the remaining passengers in the bus. There weren't many of them left. But then she saw her. She was the next to last, but there she was. There could be no mis-

taking the dark auburn hair of the well-dressed woman in her mid-forties. Even though it had been a year and a half since Percy had seen her, there was no doubt in her mind that the woman was Elena Blakely. Percy hesitated only a minute, and then she stepped forward to greet her. At the same instant, Elena found Percy and came toward her with both hands outstretched. Elena reached to kiss Percy's cheek in greeting, then she stepped back slightly in order to give her a quick inspection. She nodded her head and smiled in approval of what she saw.

"You look marvelous, Percy. I'm delighted to see you so well recovered," she said.

"Well, *recovering*, at any rate," Percy replied.

Compared to the last time Elena had seen her, so close to death, her head wrapped in white bandages, her face drawn and pale, Percy did look extremely well. Elena ran an appraising eye over the younger woman. She was wearing a simple shift dress of pale blue, tied about the waist with a cummerbund of a floral print of blue, green, and white. Tied about her head was a scarf of the same gay bright-colored print. It was obviously worn to cover the scar which was the result of the auto accident in South Carolina . . . in Charleston. But anyone who didn't know about the accident or the scar would never have guessed that the scarf was worn for any reason but its attractiveness.

Noticing that Elena was attracted to her scarf, Percy's hand instinctively flew to her head.

"I'm still a bit self-conscious about it, Elena," she explained.

"I was merely thinking how well it looked," Percy told her. "And how very fashionable."

"Thank you," Percy replied. "I mean, thank you for everything . . . everything you did."

Elena nodded her head. "I know, Percy. You don't have to tell me. I understand." To change the subject, she added, "I think you've gained some weight, too, haven't you? It's becoming."

"Heavens, I hope so. I was so thin when I got home, I could hardly believe it. Do you know that I lost twenty pounds while I was in the hospital? Twenty pounds! And the worst part of it was that putting them back on wasn't

the fun that I always thought it would be. I had to work at eating and eating so I could gain quickly and build up my strength. One of the most awful things is to be so weak . . . to have no strength . . . to give out so quickly."

"You will get no sympathy from me about having to eat, my dear. For those of us who must constantly be on guard against gaining weight, I can't say that being forced to eat is such a dreadful thing," Elena said, chuckling.

No one could call Elena fat . . . not even really overweight, but she would never qualify to model for the magazine Percy held in her hand.

"I didn't mean to sound like I was complaining," Percy laughed. "Sorry if it came out that way. No, I realize how lucky I am just to be alive to be able to eat." She was pleased that their meeting had begun on such a casual, friendly tone. She wasn't sure what she'd expected, but she was pleasantly surprised to find that she actually liked Elena and sensed that Elena liked her, also.

A week before, when the telephone call came from Elena, it took Percy completely by surprise. So much time had passed since she and Gordon had spoken or even thought about her—and true to the promise she made her husband—Percy was trying not to let her mind drift to their friend Dr. Aarons and his strange disappearance or on anything related to the accident and what happened as a result of it. She was trying to immerse herself in the world of Newport, Iowa, and the comfortable shelter it represented. She was trying to wrap herself in a tight little cocoon of urban living and remain there safe and protected.

Gordon was afraid that if she began to worry about Dr. Aarons and his fate, as she had done before, she might wind up suffering a mental breakdown. His concern was not completely without some foundation, and deep down, she was forced to admit that he might be right. The past year had been such a difficult strain on her, both physically and mentally, that she had already used up most of her reserve. She had tried her best . . . really she had . . . she had put forth a superhuman effort to assist Damon Aarons. But she had failed. She didn't dare dwell on that failure and her inability to help because it caused her nothing but unhappiness, miserable unhappiness. So, as

soon as she was able, she threw herself full force into preparations for the children to return to school and to setting their lives back on a familiar course.

The fate of Damon Aarons and those people she knew because of him had slid slowly but steadily to the back of her thoughts. She even lost track of how many weeks Elena was out of the country. So when the call came, it was surprising to find that not only had she returned, but she wanted to come to Newport. Elena asked if it would be all right with Percy and Gordon for her to make the trip. She promised that she would not stay long, but she very much wanted to come and wanted to come as soon as possible. The purpose of the trip was never mentioned, but it was obvious to all. She wanted to find out everything that Percy could remember, all the small, seemingly inconsequential details, surrounding her experience with Damon Aarons. And Percy wanted to tell her. She wanted to tell Elena everything she could remember. It would take from her some of the burden of responsibility she felt for the recovery of Dr. Aarons.

She wanted to share the experience with someone who would understand as completely as Elena would, because Elena might be the very one to use the knowledge in helping Damon. These two women, having overcome their initial animosity, seemed now to sense that together they might be his guide back to the twentieth century and his own life. They had found it impossible to work together before, but there was a difference now, Percy thought optimistically. The greeting seemed to indicate that somehow Elena had softened. Her hard brittle shell had been discarded, and that in itself was a hopeful sign.

The two of them gathered Elena's belongings, two small suitcases and a makeup bag and headed for the car.

"Well, how was the trip, Elena, not too awful, I hope," Percy inquired as she maneuvered the car out of the parking lot.

"No, it wasn't bad at all. I read and I slept, so it didn't seem to take long at all. I guess I've learned how to keep myself occupied when I travel," Elena replied. "And it's a good thing, too. I've done a good deal of traveling recently. But you know, it's an amazing thing how quickly time passes when your mind is occupied. The mind is

truly fantastic, isn't it, all the tricks it can play on you—I—I'm sorry, Percy, that wasn't—I mean, I wasn't referring to what happened to you. I guess I just put it rather badly. Forgive me," she stammered.

"It's all right, Elena, I'm not sensitive about it," Percy answered.

An awkward silence followed and continued for several blocks before Percy picked up the conversation again.

"Sorry I couldn't pick you up in Chicago, but the doctor and Gordon both were very firm about not allowing me to make the drive alone, and it was out of the question for Gordon to take the afternoon off. It really doesn't seem very hospitable to make you take the bus here, but there was nothing else to do."

"There's no need to apologize, Percy. I didn't mind the bus trip. It gave me a chance to see some of the country I hadn't seen before, while I wasn't sleeping. I found it quite beautiful."

"Yes, in its own way it is. All the open space gives a feeling of serenity exactly the opposite of all that frenzied excitement and busyness of the big cities . . . like your New York. This area is something you either take to or you don't. I suspect that you'd find it very dull before too long, though, a big city girl like you. It's beautiful but provincial," Percy said.

"You're probably right. I would begin to miss New York after a while. But my first impression of that low, flat land was how endless it seemed. It was so peaceful and absolutely fascinating."

As they drove through the outskirts of Newport, Elena studied the streets and the houses. They were so neat and clean it looked as though they had just been scrubbed and then set on freshly manicured emerald green lawns. There seemed to be nothing to disturb the order and peace and tranquillity it offered.

"You also with a charming little town here, Percy," Elena said with a touch of envy, or perhaps it was longing.

"Oh, you're merely seeing the very edge of it," Percy explained with a toss of her head. "We don't go through the downtown section or the city park with its lake and gingerbread band shell. It's really a very nice place. If

you're here long enough, I'll drive you around and show you our thriving metropolis."

"I don't know what I thought I would find—maybe a prairie town with one or two general stores surrounded by a bunch of farms," Elena told her. "It's funny, isn't it, how distorted a view you can have of someplace when you've never been there. And yet, a small town is a small town no matter what part of the country it may be in. Maybe it's just that I've never been to a lot of small towns to find out what they're like."

"I suppose you're right," Percy said. "Probably Newport is much like any small town in Vermont or Georgia or Washington, but while you're here, Elena, do us all a favor and try not to call it a *small* town . . . the local inhabitants would be offended."

"I'll try to mend my ways. How big is Newport?" Elena asked.

"Oh, seventy-five thousand, I guess. Anyway, it's somewhere around there . . . just enough to be comfortable," Percy replied.

They were now out of the city limits and driving along a road which skirted the town. It led through a newer, attractive development of homes.

"We're pushing out the boundaries of the town," Percy explained. "In fact, Gordon expects that the city limits will be extended at least five miles in all directions this winter, maybe even ten. Right now, we call ourselves city dwellers, but we're not really."

Elena watched the houses slip past. "I hope it's not going to be a great inconvenience for you to have me here, Percy. I would have been happy to stay at a hotel in town. I've gotten used to living out of a suitcase. It doesn't bother me anymore."

"I wouldn't think of letting you stay anywhere but with us, Elena. And Gordon wouldn't have it any other way. We have a lot of room at the house. Besides, the food at the hotel is pretty dull and we couldn't subject you to that," she said with a mischievous smile. She thought a minute, then added, "It's not just because we feel we owe you so much, but we really want you to stay with us."

"Thanks, Percy," Elena was pleased that Percy had said it. "I promise I won't stay long enough to become a

nuisance. But since I didn't have a chance to talk to you before I left Charleston, I felt that I had to do it now that you're well enough."

Percy nodded her head. "Yes, I know. Gordon told you some of it, didn't he?"

"He told me what you said when you regained consciousness those few times. He said that you believed you were Theodosia Burr and that you said Damon was your father."

"That's right. Damon is living in the past as Aaron Burr. That's why I became Theodosia when I went back in search of him," Percy related.

"Now I want to hear all the details of it from you, absolutely everything. I brought a portable cassette recorder with me. It's in one of the suitcases. If you don't object, I'd like to put our conversations on tape. That way I can study them when I go back to New York."

"Sounds all right to me," answered Percy. "Sounds like a good idea, in fact."

"Oh, it's not my idea. It's something we often do at the institute. It can be more helpful than taking notes."

Percy turned the car into the driveway of their home, slowly eased into the garage and stopped. "Well, here we are," she told her companion.

"What I saw of it looks lovely, Percy," Elena said.

"Thank you, Elena. It suits us and we like it. I guess that's the most you can ask of a home."

She began removing the luggage from the trunk of the car. She stood and listened for a minute to the sounds of the children which came from the backyard.

"I hear the children in the back, and from the sounds of them, I'd say they brought over some friends."

"How can you tell from here?" Elena asked.

"By the quantity and the quality of the noise. Our two could never produce that much racket by themselves."

Picking up a suitcase, Percy led the way through the door which opened into a mud room off the kitchen. She walked through the two rooms and into the hall beyond where the stairs led to the bedroom level above. Setting down her suitcase, she motioned for Elena to do the same. Together they entered the large and comfortable room at the rear of the house which overlooked the pool area and

the patio surrounding it. Percy slid open the glass door and stepped out to the patio.

"Hi, kids," she called with a wave. Then she wandered over to stand beside the lovely young woman stretched out on a chaise by the side of the pool. Percy bent down to kiss the young woman's cheek. "Thanks for being a life-guard, Sis," she said. "You remember my sister, Angie Browning, don't you, Elena?" she asked, turning back to her guest.

Elena smiled and studied Angie's face. How very wholesome and innocent she looks, Elena thought. It was hard to imagine that this was the young woman who precipitated the whole fantastic chain of events. Not that it was of her own doing, certainly. She was merely the first victim of transferring through time, and an unsuspecting one at that.

"Yes, I remember meeting Angie in New York. How have you been?" Elena replied.

"Just fine," Angie answered with a dazzling smile. "Welcome to Newport, Elena. It's very nice of you to come out to Iowa, you know; but I'm sure Percy has already told you that," she said.

"You may find it hard to believe, but even if Percy had refused to see me, I think I would have come to camp on her doorstep till she changed her mind," Elena said.

"I don't know if she told you, but Percy wanted to get in touch with you before. But the Whites said you hadn't returned from your trip. So I know it's a relief to have you here at last," Angie assured her. "Well, Percy, now that you're back, I'm sure the kids can get along without me. I have things to do at home, and I'll leave the two of you to talk."

"You don't have to rush off, dear," Percy suggested. "You're welcome to stay and join our chat, if you'd like to. Really, we'd be glad to have you stay if you don't absolutely have to go." Turning to Elena, she said, "Would you like to go for a quick swim? The pool is heated, and it's really very nice."

"You make it sound inviting, but I didn't bring a bathing suit. I had no idea the weather would be quite this warm, and it never occurred to me that there would be a pool in my own backyard. There, you see how living in a

city apartment has ruined my thinking? We use the ocean beaches and the lakes in the mountains a few hours away from the city for swimming, and they're suited to polar bears at this time of year," she said with a grin.

"I might be able to find a suit that would fit you. I'm not sure, but I'll look," volunteered Percy.

"No, no, don't even bother. I'm certain that I'd never be able to get into one of yours. But don't let me stop you. Please feel free to go for a swim if you'd like to, Percy. After all, it's your pool. I'll sit here and relax and watch," Elena said.

"Oh, I can't swim yet. Next summer I will. Besides, I'd rather stay and chat with you while they're still busy," she said indicating the children frolicking in the pool.

"I'll get dressed and be down in a few minutes, Percy," Angie called as she disappeared into the house.

Suddenly, Percy felt a great spray of water hit her legs as a large ball came bouncing out of the pool.

"Hey, throw it back, will you, Mom?" Bobby called to her, holding his hands over his head.

Percy bent down to pick up the ball. With great force, she threw it directly into the floating basketball hoop. The children yelled approval and began threshing through the clear blue water in a race to recover the ball. Percy turned to Elena, brushing at her wet skirt. "I think we'd better go inside, where it's safe, or else we might as well jump into the water. Either way we're going to get wet." At the door she turned and called, "See you later, kids."

Elena sank into a comfortable chair while Percy settled herself into an adjacent sofa which allowed her a view of the activity in the pool.

"I'm sorry I couldn't come to New York, Elena, and save you the trip out here. You must be tired of traveling. How long were you out of the country?" Percy asked.

"Six months," replied Elena.

"Then you just returned? I didn't realize that you were gone all this time," said Percy.

"It was longer than I expected it to be when I left," Elena answered.

"Then I'm more sorry than ever. But Gordon is even apprehensive about having me drive the car around Newport. You can imagine what would happen if I tried to go

to New York. He understands, though, that I still want to help Damon, maybe more so now that we know where he is. But I'm trying not to let that impulse control me as it began to do before the accident.

"Oh, I would never try to go to him again. It's too late for me to try that, I know. Though there are times when I'm tempted, but I just have such a strong fear that since Theodosia is dead, that I . . . well, I could never do it for fear I might . . .

"Anyhow, I simply wasn't strong enough when I had the opportunity, and now I'm sure that same kind of opportunity has vanished and will never be there again. Gordon seems to understand—but I guess he doesn't really. He can't help worrying that one of these times something might happen and—well, I sympathize with him. It's been difficult for him, a lot more than it has for me in many ways, I'm sure. I suppose it's always harder to watch someone you love suffer while you stand by powerless to do anything, powerless to help them, so much harder than it is to actually be the one who suffers. I would never deliberately put him through that anxiety again."

"I was aware of how distressing it was for him, Percy. He was trying to cope with a circumstance he didn't understand, and because he didn't, he had no idea of how to fight it or help it—or even which he should be trying to do," Elena replied. "I'm sure you've talked about it, and he probably has a better understanding of what was happening. And now that he does, I imagine it's even more terrifying to him. Of course, he wants to prevent a recurrence if he possibly can. And I must tell you how much I regret that it took me so long to overcome my resentment and come around to squarely facing the realization that you had been able to do something I tried so hard to do and failed . . . not once but several times. I'm ashamed of myself, and I truly am sorry, Percy, I want you to believe that."

"I know that, Elena. But it's over now; it's been over a long time. That experience is behind me, and you must put all feelings of regret behind you. You know that if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be here today. So how can you even think that there would be any bad feelings? How could I possibly resent you when, in a way, you saved my

life. I will stop gushing my gratitude at you if you'll stop punishing yourself with regrets. Is that fair enough?"

The smile she gave Elena came easily because it was genuine and filled with warmth. It came easily because Percy realized that somehow the crisis they had passed through together in Charleston was going to furnish a bridge between them to transform their initial distrust into a budding and sensitive friendship.

"Fair enough," Elena agreed. Giving Percy a carefully appraising look, she smiled as she said, "It's amazing to see you looking so well, Percy. If I didn't know all that you've been through, it would be hard to believe that you were so close to death—almost too close—just six months ago."

"It's amazing how well I feel, too—most of the time," Percy responded. She pulled the scarf from her head and running her hand through her short brown hair, she said somewhat ruefully, "I'm even getting some hair back. For a while I thought I was going to be bald as an egg forever. But even that is finally showing improvement. When the bandage first came off, I was certain that I would be wearing a scarf or a turban everywhere I went until it was long again. I did, too, at first—even around the house. It looked really dreadful—just a short stubby bunch of bristles all over my head, with that great ugly red scar—such a horrible color of red. I even hated to look at myself in the mirror. But I guess I'm growing used to it, and now that my hair is getting a little longer and it almost hides that awful scar, I'm beginning to enjoy my short hair. It has a lot going for it. It's never been easier to care for. All I have to do is wash it, rub it with a towel, and brush it out. There's not enough of it yet to fuss with. I may decide to keep it this way."

"You're lucky. Short hair is very becoming on you, Percy," Elena told her.

Percy's hair was soft and thick with a tendency to wave softly rather than to curl. Even though it was no longer than two inches anywhere on her head, it fell gently into a soft pattern of curves.

"Gordon says the scar doesn't bother him and I shouldn't worry about it," Percy said, as she gently stroked the hair over the scar on her forehead. There was no way

to cover it completely because it ran almost to the bridge of her nose. "I guess it's my female vanity that makes me so self-conscious about it. I feel like people are staring at me most of the time. That's why I wear a scarf and dark glasses when I go out."

"I won't tell you it doesn't show," Elena admitted.

"Well, thank heaven for that. A lie so obvious as that would get our new relationship off to a very shaky start, Elena, I warn you. I'm well aware of how it looks and the effect it has on some people. The children are used to it now, though, and that's a help."

"Have you thought about having plastic surgery?" Elena inquired.

"Of course I've thought about it. I've even inquired about it, too, and I might give it serious consideration in a year or so. My doctor informs me that the tissue needs that much time to heal before we even think about cosmetic surgery. Only, I'm afraid that by then I'll be so accustomed to it, I'd miss it if it were taken away." Percy laughed.

Angie walked into the room as Percy finished her comment. Angie was dressed and carried a beach bag holding her wet clothes and robe.

"Am I interrupting?" she asked.

"Certainly not. We were just discussing my distinctive forehead," Percy replied.

"Is the invitation to join you still good? Because if it's not, just say so. I'll be offended, but I'll go home to lick my wounds," she joked.

"Don't be silly. There's nothing private about it, Angie. At least, not private from you. You know all about it, anyway, so come and join us," Percy coaxed. She patted a place beside herself on the sofa for Angie to sit.

"Elena, would you like to talk about Damon now or would you rather wait until later—after dinner perhaps—or maybe you'd prefer to put it off until tomorrow?" Percy asked.

"Well, I'm very eager to hear about it, Percy, but we'll make it whenever you feel like telling me, I'll be ready to listen," she said. "I can wait if you'd prefer. And, I imagine we'll go over it more than once before I leave. Maybe the second time we talk about it, you'll remember more

things. I don't expect you to give a perfect recitation, recalling every detail in the first conversation."

"That's good. I'd like to start right away, if it's up to me. Then after you think about what I've told you, you may have some questions to ask that will help me remember something else. And we can pick it up again later or tomorrow or whenever you say." Percy stood up. "But before we start, let me get you something to drink. Oh, I didn't think—maybe you'd like to bathe or change into something else. Would you? I should have given you the opportunity before."

"No, I'm comfortable, but I would like to have a Scotch and water since you offered a drink," Elena answered.

"And that's what you shall have," Percy replied. "Would you like your usual sherry, Angie?"

"Ummmm, sounds nice," Angie nodded.

Percy carefully poured the drinks and carried a glass to Elena, then handed one to Angie. She poured a glass of white wine for herself, plopped in an ice cube, and resumed her seat on the sofa. She sipped pensively at her wine, wondering how to start the discussion, where to begin, how far back. But before she could think of what she should say, Linda burst into the room, followed closely by Bobby, both nearly hidden in enormous beach towels of brilliant stripes.

"Hi, Mom; we decided it was time to come in," said Bobby.

"Besides, Margaret and Herbie had to go home now anyhow," Linda added. "They promised their mother they wouldn't stay longer than dinner."

"Yeah, we tried to get them to eat here, but they said they promised," Bobby explained. "Their mom thinks they eat here too much, they said."

"Frankly, I'm glad they didn't stay. We have company tonight. I guess you just forgot." Percy introduced the children: "Linda, Bobby, this is our friend Elena Blakely from New York City."

"How do you do," said Bobby, offering his hand to Elena, only to have the towel fall around his waist. Without waiting for her to take his hand, he grabbed at the slipping towel and pulled it over his shoulders. "Sorry," he said, with an irresistible grin.

"That's all right," she replied. "It's nice to meet you, Bobby."

"Me, too," Bobby answered.

Linda smiled at her. "Hello," she said shyly.

"Hello, Linda; it's nice to meet you, too," Elena said to her.

Linda smiled again in response and looked timidly at her mother.

Percy reached out her hand and drew her daughter to her for a kiss.

"Why don't you go upstairs and change, children, and if you have any homework, this would be a good time to start it," Percy told them.

"Oh, not now, Mom—I'm starved," Bobby protested.

Percy merely looked at him and raised one eyebrow, indicating that he'd better follow instructions. Linda turned and started up the stairs with Bobby slowly tagging along behind.

"Elena, I'm sorry, but would you excuse me while I feed the children now? Sometimes they eat much earlier than we do," Percy explained. "It's especially hard on them when Gordon is late getting home. Then they really get cranky. Not only do their personalities improve with a full stomach, but so do their studies."

"Please, Percy, I don't want to disrupt your normal home-life in any way," Elena responded.

"Why don't you let me fix something for them," Angie volunteered, springing to her feet.

"Well, if you don't mind," Percy replied. "There's a pan on the second shelf of the refrigerator, just turn the oven to three-seventy-five and pop it in. Set the timer for twenty minutes. That should be enough to warm it up. Then I'll only have to fix a salad for them. The greens are already washed, and it shouldn't take more than a few minutes when they come down."

"I'll make the salad, too, and while I'm about it, why don't I set the table for them. You and Elena can go ahead and talk. I'll catch up on things when I come back."

"You've heard it before, anyway, Angie; I doubt if there's anything new likely to turn up— Anyway, thanks for the cheffing," Percy called to her sister already busy in the kitchen.

"I'd still be interested in knowing what Elena has to say about it," Angie called back. "I've gotten kind of interested in this Dr. Arons myself, you know."

Percy relaxed against the sofa. "Where do you want me to start, Elena?" she asked.

"I know about the accident—you swerved to avoid hitting the boy, and the car went off the bridge. You don't have to recall any of that for me. And you were cut on the head, a bad wound, and unconscious in the hospital for a long time. All that I already know. And, of course, I know that when you began to come out of the coma—for a few minutes at a time—that you thought you were ... you claimed to be Theodosia Burr."

"Theodosia Burr Alston. I was ... she was ... married to Joseph Alston," Percy corrected her.

"Theodosia Burr Alston. Then you sank back into unconsciousness again, and the next time you spoke it was about an island. That's what really seemed to convince Claire that it wasn't just senseless babble on your part, that you knew what you were saying, that you actually were living another life in another time—like Damon, but not the same way. She suspected it before, but she wasn't sure until then. And, of course, that's when she realized that you were in more danger than the doctors were aware of. That's when she came to me. It took some time to win me over to her thinking. After that it took the efforts of all of us to bring your mind back to the present time, back to your body and your own life." That was the surface of it, and that was what Elena knew. It was what lay beneath that surface that she had come to discover.

"Yes, that's a pretty accurate basic outline of what happened to me in this century. So we can skip those details. I'll concentrate on the life I lived as Theodosia and what I remember of that life as myself, when Damon and I were able to just be ourselves."

"That's exactly what I'm after, Percy, your life in the past century—and Damon's," Elena replied.

"Well, let me see—I remember that I was aware of finding Damon first at the plantation—the Oaks," Percy began.

"Wait. Don't start until I have my recorder, Percy. It probably won't be easy for you at first, remembering that

is, so let me record it all. In fact, to remember it may be so uncomfortable for you that you'll only want to go through it once—then we'll talk about details when we cover it again, with questions and answers. That should be less strain on you."

Elena was busily opening one of the suitcases at the foot of the stairs. Under some neatly folded blouses in one corner, she located the small cassette recorder. Placing it on the floor beside her, she closed the bag and returned to Percy, still seated scrunched into the sofa. Elena placed the instrument on the coffee table between them, then attached a small microphone and positioned it on the table as near to Percy as she could. Sitting beside Percy, she instructed, "This microphone is a very powerful little instrument, so you don't have to shout or even raise your voice, just speak normally and say whatever you want to say. Try to forget it's even here if you can. You can make any corrections or changes you want to make. It doesn't matter if you pause or stammer. It's just for me to listen to."

"You don't want me to tell you anything about the accident or the rescue, right?" Percy asked.

"No, no, that's not necessary. Just tell me about your life and what you know of Damon's life—and about your own attempts to come back with him. Everything you can remember about that is what I want to know."

"Well, I think it might be useful if I went a little further beyond that and start when Damon made his trip back through time in order to rescue Angie. I can explain his situation better if I do, and—of course—mine was an outgrowth of his. We spoke about it, Damon and I, so that's how I know what happened to him. We already knew that Damon was right in his assumption that Angie's body was taken over by the spirit of Angelica Hamilton and transported back through time so that she could relive that period of her life which involved the death of her brother, Philip, and her father, Alexander Hamilton.

"She loved them so dearly, and her spirit so desperately wanted to prevent their untimely deaths, that she was finally driven to such extreme. The reason Angie doesn't have any remembrance of the experience is because she was an unsuspecting accessory. She physically resembled Angelica, and she happened to be where the spirit was.

But Damon is different, and I was different. Damon decided to deliberately transfer himself back through time in an effort to save Angie. He was himself responsible for being transported back into time. However, in the process of the transfer, he encountered the spirit of Aaron Burr. That restless spirit was seeking an opportunity to relive part of his life. He was certain that he could succeed in establishing his monarchy in Mexico if only he could live those years again, and Damon was the instrument by which he was able to go back and try again. Because Damon willed himself to go back to the past, he now has—or he did when I was with him—his own mind as well as the mind of Aaron Burr, so that they are literally two beings in one body.

"It's hard to explain because it's possible to lose your identity inside the mind of the other person. It's also possible to take control so that the other mind is subservient. When we tried to return to this time together, Damon had a terrible struggle with the mind of Burr for supremacy of the one body they shared. He would have had to relinquish that body if Damon returned to his own life. On one attempt, I know that Burr refused to let him go. He forced Damon to give up the effort. But, I must confess, at another time, I failed him. He could have come back then, but he wouldn't. It was a time when he caught Burr unprepared, completely offguard, so that he could have made it back here. But I couldn't face the pain that I was returning to, and I refused to make the transition to my own life. We had started together, and we were on the edge of this time—but I couldn't. I just couldn't! Damon, of course, refused to leave me back in the nineteenth century alone. He could have succeeded by himself. He should have! He should have! I wanted so much to help him, but I only trapped him more miserably in the past. If he feels there is the slightest chance that I may still be alive somewhere back there, he won't return. I failed him utterly."

"You can't blame yourself, Percy. How could you know what had happened to you here? You couldn't control the pain you were experiencing here. It was all you could do to bear it. Nobody can blame you for what you did. We would all have done the same," Elena told her.

"Maybe, but it wasn't anybody else. I'm the one who

failed him." Percy shook her head thoughtfully as she lifted the glass to her lips and sipped at her drink.

Angie breezed in from the kitchen. "Everything's ready for your fledglings, Percy," she said. When she saw that they were in the process of recording, she retreated a step and apologized. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt. I didn't think . . ."

Elena waved her forward to join them. "It's all right, Angie. It's just for my own use. Come over and sit down with us." Elena reached out and flicked off the machine. "Percy tells me that you still have no recollection of when you went back in time," she said to her as Angie sat in a chair opposite.

"No, I haven't. None at all," Angie replied. "I'm sorry."

"Then you never will remember it," Elena told her.

"I can't even say it seems like a dream, because it really seems like just nothing happened—like I never left David's side."

"And I remember everything so very clearly," Percy said. "It's just as though I had seen a movie, and I can tell you the whole plot. I seemed to be a part of it, and yet I was detached from it. I suppose that's why I can talk about it without too much distress, except about Damon and failing to return when he wanted me to. It's like it was happening to me, and yet it wasn't. I don't know how else to explain it."

"You've explained it quite well, Percy," Elena replied. "I understand perfectly what you're saying. I believe it's possible. In fact, I know it's possible. There are people who are able to transfer themselves back into time in much that way."

"Is that true, Elena? Can people really choose to do what I did?" Percy asked.

"I don't believe it," exclaimed Angie.

"Not exactly like you did," Elena said. "Yours is a very special case—yours and Damon's. You lived through a long period of history. That's most unusual both because you lived as someone else and because it was so long. But it is possible for certain people with well-developed psychic powers to go back in history—to sort of hover above an event and witness it, but only for a very brief spell and only as an observer, of course. What is most amazing—

truly incredible—is that Percy was able to do this instinctively.”

“Not entirely, Elena; I had some help from the blow to my head,” Percy protested. “If I hadn’t begun to have hallucinations, I’m sure I never would have accomplished any such transfer through time by myself.”

“But the remarkable thing is that you did it at all,” Elena insisted. “No matter how it was accomplished, the fact that it was accomplished is what is so impressive, especially to someone like me.”

Percy sipped at her wine again and shrugged her shoulders. She had never been able to figure out how much of the experience was of her own doing and how much was the result of the accident. She only knew that it had happened.

“I suppose the reason I remember everything is that I wanted so terribly much to help Damon. I tried desperately hard to contact him but without results, then when we began to talk about the trip to Charleston, things started to fall into place. I don’t mean that I was fated to have the accident. It’s not that. I just mean that the place pulled a me like a magnet. I felt that I had to go there. I just had to. Maybe Damon was trying to reach me, too. It made sense, in a way for me to become Theodosia. That’s where Theodosia lived after she was married—in Charleston and on the plantation, The Oaks, and sometimes she spent summers in the house on Debordieu Island. Poor Theodosia. She wasn’t very strong. She really wasn’t well much of the time, and in spite of her wealth, life was not ever kind to her after she grew up. She was very ill at the time I first became aware of living in that time. Maybe that’s why we were so well suited to each other, she and I.”

“That could be; she was also very fond of her father—as you felt a closeness to Damon,” Elena added quietly, wondering what Percy’s response would be.

There was a slight hesitation before Percy answered. “Yes, she loved him without rhyme or reason. There was an almost unnatural devotion . . . worship on her part, that’s true. And on his, also. She was the center of his life after her mother died.” Wistfully, she added, “He adored

Theodosia above all other women, and she returned that love a thousandfold.”

“I understand better now why you refused to return to this time until you were convinced that he was already here,” Elena said, her voice barely carrying the few feet that separated them.

Percy nodded her head solemnly. She didn’t want to think of Damon and where he might be since she left the nineteenth century, but she could not help herself now. The door to the past was too far open, and she could not force it shut. Where was he? What must he be thinking? What would he be doing? Would he believe that she had died at sea with Theodosia and finally make the transfer back to the twentieth century by himself, or would he wait until he received some word, some sign that she was safely here. As long as there was the slightest chance that she could still be somewhere in that past century, would he remain there to help her back if he could find her? That would be very like Damon. She was sure that would be his ultimate decision.

Sensing that she was lost in remembering him, Elena broke through her thoughts. “I agree with you, Percy. I believe that you remember your experience because you encouraged, helped it to happen.”

Elena reached over to turn on the recorder once more. “Tell me, when you were Theodosia, did you always live her life with her? Were you always there? Was it a day-to-day existence like your life is here?”

“Yes, it was. It was a day-by-day, hour-by-hour existence, but somehow, it was not her entire life. I was aware of her early life, but I began to live with her sometime after the duel that killed Alexander Hamilton, and I passed through the episode of her life when her father was involved in his plan to set up an empire . . . and then his trial for treason against the government. Then their last days together before his exile, and her life in South Carolina while he was in exile in Europe, and the sudden, tragic death of her son. That was so heartbreaking, and then—and finally—I had just boarded the ship *Patriot* to go to Burr in New York. We were only a short time out of the harbor at Georgetown when we were stopped by a

British man-of-war. The British officers came aboard and spoke with Captain Overstocks.

"They searched the ship from stem to stern, and then returned again to speak with Captain Overstocks, who handed the captain of the British ship the letter of safe passage which Joseph had written on my behalf. The British captain read it carefully, then folded it again and handed it to me. 'Madame Alston,' he said, 'I shall honor the letter as a British officer and a gentleman. May you have a safe journey and a pleasant visit in New York with your father. May we assist you in any additional manner?' He bowed slightly as I offered him my hand. 'Thank you for your courtesy, Captain,' I replied. 'I shall inform my husband of your cordial safe passage. And I thank you for your good wishes.' With that the British officers left the ship, returning to their own vessel, and we resumed our course. Sometime towards morning, however, I was awakened by the rather violent tossing of the ship. A storm had arisen, forcing the captain to sail further out into the ocean than he had planned. He hoped to sail around it, I think . . . and then the glassy seas with their awesome calm . . . and I remember the haze and the stillness . . . and then the music that seemed to surround us. It was music like nothing I've ever heard."

"You were in the Bermuda Triangle," whispered Elena.

"Then I remember feeling myself being pulled—like being dragged along—a tug-of-war almost, because I didn't want to go. I finally woke in the hospital with Gordon beside me. All those years that passed had gone by in . . . what was it . . . maybe ten days—two weeks at the most?"

"Yes, it's possible for time to accelerate like that" Elena answered. "Now what we must try to decide is whether he will try to come back by himself, and if he tries, will he be able to do it. And for that question, I have no ready answer."

"I can't answer it with any assurance. I can tell you that there was a time when he could . . . and I suppose if Aaron Burr feels that he has nothing left to live for, he might lapse again, and Damon could return . . . if he tries. But whether or not Damon will try, until he receives some

sign that I have already safely returned, I don't know. I don't think so, but I don't know."

"Perhaps, after enough time passes, don't you think he might?" Angie asked.

"There's no way anyone can know, I suppose," replied Elena.

They all sat in silence. It seemed foolish to reassure each other that he would return by himself. It had been such a long time now, and he hadn't done so. But what was there to be done if he didn't? Percy waited for Elena to suggest some solution, but Elena seemed lost in thought.

"I can tell you that when I began to be well enough to be up and around again, I began to read everything I could find concerning Theodosia and Aaron Burr," Percy said. "I even wrote Claire and asked her to go to the library in New York. She did that, and on her own, she went to the New-York Historical Society to see what they might have. She read books and papers and letters. From that, what we learned was that it took a long time for Aaron Burr to believe that his daughter was gone. When he did, of course, he was nearly destroyed with grief. In less than a year, he lost his only grandson and then his only daughter. On top of all else he had suffered, it was a cruel blow. For months, he clung to the hope that somehow she had been saved and would arrive safely in New York harbor—how, he didn't care. He made a habit of walking every day back and forth along the Battery waiting for her ship to arrive. Hope faded very hard for him, though, eventually, he did have to admit that she was gone. And that must be what Damon is living through now."

"Then Damon will not be inclined to return here soon if he's left to himself," Elena observed. "Like Burr, he will cling to the hope that you are still alive. He has only two alternatives that seem possible to him, you know—either you are dead or you are alive in that century. How you could manage to return to this time safely without him has probably not occurred to him. If you could not return with his aid, how would you be able to return by yourself? Agreed?"

"Yes, I suppose I must," answered Percy.

"Did he know that you had been in an accident?" Elena questioned.

"No, I didn't know that myself. I felt—no, I sensed that I was ill, that there was something wrong, but I didn't know what it was," Percy answered. "I just knew that I was faced with a horrible pain if I came back."

"It may be that he suspects you died as a result of that illness or whatever he has decided was wrong with you, and that he's refusing to face up to it as Burr is refusing to face up to the loss of his daughter," Elena suggested.

"Oh, Elena, surely not," Angie exclaimed.

"It's very possible. Why not? The world of paranormal events or psychic phenomena is very strange. If there are two minds living within one body, it's quite normal for their thinking to meld at times."

"That's true, it is," Percy agreed. "There were times when I was not separated from Theodosia, when the two of us were merely one person, not even two extensions of that one person, but one single being, mentally and physically, and yet not totally one, but our thinking united and came together."

"Oh," said Angie, giving a shudder. "That's spooky, Percy. Honestly, it is." She protested.

"Still, it's true," Percy assured her. The sound of Bobby and Linda bouncing down the stairs, made her sit erect, then she bent across the table to Elena as she said, "Elena, could you hide that thing?" She motioned toward the recording machine with her head. "We don't talk about any of this in front of the children. I'm afraid they would have nightmares. And if they didn't, I wouldn't want them telling any of their friends in Newport. I'd become the town freak. Just remember, I don't want anything said about it in their hearing."

"I understand," Elena responded. Deftly, she unplugged the microphone and closed up the unit. She looked about her for a place to hide it, then lifted a cushion on the sofa and tucked it underneath. But the cushion refused to return to any semblance of its normal position, and there was no way to disguise the fact that something was beneath it. Percy quickly grabbed it and carried it along with her empty glass to the liquor cabinet. Opening a door of the cabinet, she placed it among the bottles there.

"Is dinner ready, Mom?" Bobby asked, not yet in the room. "Are we gonna have to wait for Dad? Honestly, I'm starved."

"Me, too, Mommy," Linda agreed. "Couldn't we, please, eat now?"

"Of course, you can eat now," Percy told them. "I've already explained to Miss Blakely that children get very hungry very early."

Bobby turned to face Elena. "Do your children always wait and eat with you?"

Elena laughed at the earnestness with which he asked the question. "I don't have any children, Bobby. I'm not married."

"Oh," Bobby said. He hadn't considered that possibility.

"You can eat with us, then, if you'd like to," Linda offered.

Percy kissed the top of her daughter's head. "That's very sweet of you, darling, but I think Daddy would like it if we waited for him. But we'd be happy to come sit with you while you're eating, if you like."

"No, that's O.K. You don't have to. You can go ahead and talk. We won't fight." Bobby said in a very grown-up manner.

"Since I practically fixed your dinner myself, I'll get you started, and then I have to be on my way." Angie said. "My husband likes to eat, too, you know." She took Linda by the hand, and they went together into the kitchen.

As soon as they disappeared, and Percy heard the sound of dishes and utensils, she said softly, "I don't know what else there is to tell you, Elena. Can you think of anything you'd like to ask me now?"

"No, Percy. You've told me a great deal already. I'll listen to this and see if I feel there's anything missing. I know some of the memories must be painful, and I don't want to press you, but it's essential that I have as much as I can get. You see, I feel that I'm now the logical person to make an effort to help Damon return, and I want to be thoroughly prepared."

"Oh, yes, I agree. I think you're the only one to help him now. I could never go back. Since I lived in the body of Theodosia, it would be impossible. Naturally, I could never tell you that you *must* try, Elena. It's such a danger-

ous thing to attempt. Even if it were possible for you to transfer back through time, there is no way of telling what might become of you. That's the awful part. And there's no way of knowing how rapidly Damon's life as Aaron Burr is passing—compared to our own, I mean."

"You're not to worry about that, Percy. If I do decide to make the effort to go back and find him, it will be my own decision, and you mustn't consider it your responsibility in any way. Secondly, I think it might be better if we discussed this after our dinner. I have something to tell you about my trip. I think you'll be most interested, but I wouldn't want the children to hear, and they will probably be finished soon. I'll wait and tell you and Gordon at the same time."

"Elena, that's not fair. I'm seething with curiosity now. Couldn't you give me a hint," Percy pleaded.

"It's another of those things that may give the children nightmares if they overheard. It's not frightening really, just unusual and totally fascinating. I would never have believed it possible if I hadn't experienced it. It may help me in trying to bring Damon back."

"Now I *am* curious," Percy told her.

Elena smiled enigmatically and sipped her Scotch.

Within minutes, the children had finished their meal, as Elena predicted, and came rushing in to plunk themselves down beside their mother, one on each side.

"Did you clean up the table?" she asked.

"Uh huh," Linda said, as Bobby nodded his head in agreement.

"They did, and a very decent job, too," said Angie, striding into the room. She kissed her sister on the cheek and waved to Elena, saying, "It's nice to see you again, Elena. Have you any idea how long you'll be here?"

"A couple of days, I think; I don't believe it'll take any longer than that, and I'm anxious to get back and start on my project," Elena said.

"I'll try to see you again before you leave, then," Angie replied. Waving as she left the room, she called, "So long, kids, thanks for the swim."

"So long," answered Bobby.

"Bye, Aunt Angie," called Linda.

"All right, now, tell me about the homework," said Percy as she looked accusingly at Bobby.

"I don't have any," offered Linda.

"And I only have a very little. Do I have to do it now?" he asked.

"When would you like to do it, if not now?" inquired his mother.

"How about later?" Bobby suggested.

"But later is bedtime."

"Not that much later, just a little later. How about half an hour?" Bobby bargained.

"That sounds reasonable. O.K., it's a deal." Then Percy asked, "What would you like to do now? Want to stay and talk with us? Should we all play a game?"

"Mom, it's Tuesday night," Bobby chided her.

"Yes, that's what it is, Tuesday night, isn't it?" Percy answered.

"Tuesday's the only good night to watch television, Mommy," Linda explained.

"Ohhhhhhh, I forgot, can you believe that? We'll excuse you so you can go and watch," Percy told them.

"We'll come down and say good night before we go to bed," Bobby guaranteed her. Linda was already halfway up the stairs to the bedroom where a second television set was kept.

"See you later, Mommy," she called back.

"They seem like delightful children, Percy," Elena said.

"They're both adorable."

"Don't forget your homework, Bobby," Percy called after them.

They had barely stopped by on their way from one room to another, but there was a distinct quietness now that they had gone. Percy smiled as she always did when she realized this. "They are delightful, Elena, and I love them dearly. They're quarrelsome and ornery and full of mischief but they can also be full of love, and I'm very glad that I survived to see them grow up. And I have you to thank for that. Oh, forgive me, Elena. I know I promised not to dwell on it, but there are times when I'm overwhelmed with gratitude toward you. I only wish there were something I could do for you that would be of equal value."

"There is. You've already started doing it. There's no one else who can tell me what you've been through, no one else who can help me find Damon. You're doing that."

"No, that's not what I mean."

"But that's what I need, and only you can fill that need for me. Maybe what I did for you was more spectacular—bringing you back to this twentieth-century life of yours at the moment you were about to die as Theodosia Burr. It was spectacular, yes, but stupidly dangerous. If I hadn't resisted believing that you were really living as Theodosia, I would probably have saved you a good deal of anguish—at least, I would have saved Gordon a good deal of anguish, and you need never have come so close to death."

"No move recriminations on either part, Elena," Percy said.

"Do you realize that at first I was so jealous of you that I would gladly have let you die if it meant that you didn't really accomplish the transfer through time back to Damon. But then, I knew that was foolish and that to sacrifice you would only mean sacrificing Damon also. But I've regretted that feeling ever since, Percy."

"You were forgiven long ago, Elena." Percy rose from her seat and smoothed her skirt. "Gordon should be home very soon now, and I still have a few finishing touches to put on the dinner. Would you mind if I worked while we talked?"

"I'd like to help," Elena responded.

Together they finished the dinner preparations. As always, it went very quickly with help. Elena took charge of the salad, breaking the greens neatly and chopping the crisp vegetables with a practiced hand. She concocted a marvelously tangy dressing while Percy finished preparing the vegetable casserole and basted the roast pork with its orange sauce for the last time. As they were finishing and ready to leave the kitchen, Percy heard the sound of Gordon's car pulling into the garage. She rushed to the door to greet him.

"Hi, Honey," she said, as she threw open the door. He gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek she offered him before he spotted Elena on the other side of the room. Taking

Percy's hand in his, he walked directly across the kitchen to greet their guest. "It's good to see you, Elena," he said, emphasizing the remark with a kiss on her cheek.

"You're looking much better than the last time I saw you," Elena said, giving an amused smile.

"I hope so," Gordon laughed. "That was absolutely the worst time in my whole life, and I'm not ashamed to say I'm glad it's over." He put his arm about Percy's waist and drew her to him; holding her affectionately, he kissed her scarred forehead. "Thanks to you, Elena, life is good for us now," he told her.

"Percy and I have been all through that, David. We came to a draw, didn't we, Percy?" Elena replied, brushing aside the compliment.

"Yes, we've agreed not to talk about it anymore on Elena's visit, so you can't talk about it either," Percy informed him.

"So be it!" said Gordon. But I can't believe that the two of you have been discussing the weather all afternoon."

"No, of course, we talked about the Theodosia episode. I told Elena all I could remember about that life and about Damon. She brought a portable recorder so she can study it. We'll talk some more about it later. Tell me," she said, confronting him. "Are you hungry or would you like to have a drink before dinner? I must confess that Elena and I have already had cocktails so you'll probably be drinking alone, but we wouldn't mind."

"Well," he replied pursing his lips. "I don't like to drink alone, so why not have dinner and I'll settle for wine with the meal," Gordon proposed.

"Perfect. That's just the right answer," Percy replied gaily.

"Where are the children of the house? It's so quiet," he asked, peering into the family room.

"Oh, they're watching television in our bedroom; Tuesday is the only good night to watch, you know," Percy told him, imitating the tone that Bobby had used with her.

"So, Tuesday is the only good night, eh?" he queried, "How come nobody ever told me?"

"I never knew it either," Percy admitted.

"I like your children, Gordon," Elena told him.

"Thanks, Elena, so do we—sometimes they can be a pain, but mostly they're terrific," he said.

Dinner was a pleasant and relaxed hour and a half, leisurely and unhurried. The subject of Damon Aarons was carefully avoided. As they sat lingering over coffee, Linda and Bobby arrived, dressed for bed. They dispensed good night hugs and kisses to their parents. Each of them solemnly shook hands with Elena as they wished her good night. Bobby explained to his mother that he hadn't quite finished his homework and promised to go to bed promptly when it was done. Linda asked permission to read until she was sleepy, which her mother agreed to, as long as it didn't get too late.

After the children retired to their rooms, Elena helped Percy clear the dishes and tidy up the kitchen. When they were finished, Percy made a fresh pot of coffee and carried it into the family room while Elena carried a tray with the cups and saucers and a large platter of cookies. As she poured the coffee, Percy finally burst forth, "Elena, I'm dying of curiosity. I can't stand it any longer. Tell us." Then she explained to Gordon, "Elena said there was something unusual and fascinating she had to tell us, and I'm about to burst a gullet from the suspense. She wanted to wait until you came home, and I think we've been patient long enough."

"I guess I put it badly, Percy. It's not worth all that. I'm afraid you're going to find it disappointing."

"Let me be the judge of that. Just tell us what it is," Percy coaxed.

"Well, while I was working in Egypt, I met a truly remarkable man," Elena confessed.

"Oh, Elena, for heaven's sake," Percy's laugh came in a rush. "You're in love! That's what it is, isn't it?"

"No, that's not exactly it. I'm attracted to him. He's very handsome, and we have a marvelous relationship. But you couldn't really say that we're in love. I—I don't know how to explain it. If I said there was a closeness of mind, would that sound funny? Would you understand what I mean?"

"Well . . ." Gordon began uncertainly.

"Let me tell you about him first, because he's quite unusual—fantastic, I think, would be a better description,"

Elena explained. "He's a psychic personality like no one else I've ever known—not even Damon. The things he does, the things he feels, the things he senses, are quite remarkable. Damon has certain psychic powers, also, but they were channeled primarily into the field of the occult. This man encompasses a much broader area than that. He also possesses a great deal of human compassion for people. I've seen him read the thoughts of a man seated across the table from him. I've seen him foretell events of happiness and of tragedy. He's gentle, kindly, has a marvelous sense of humor—and this extraordinary ability to see things both future and past."

"What do you mean by see both future and past, Elena?" Gordon asked.

"Do you mean that literally?" Percy wanted to know.

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean. He has gone back in time. I've watched him do it. There was the site of a strange altar that we found in Egypt, he did it there. He described the events that were taking place as though he were actually watching the whole thing as it happened. It was one of the most remarkable things I've ever experienced. He described the events so thoroughly that they were able to piece together the significance of the site as it related to ancient times. I'm sorry he wasn't with us in Italy when we were there, but the institute hadn't heard of him then. His own country tries to keep his abilities under wraps."

"But who is he? Where is he now?" Percy wondered.

"He's an Egyptian scientist who has done extensive work in the psychic field in his own country. His name is Raymond Saundre. He's about forty-five or fifty, I would say. He's rather tall, over six feet, very trim, dark hair and eyes, very handsome. From the few things he's told me about himself, I gather his family is wealthy, sort of aristocratic. But there's something very appealing about him that has nothing to do with his physical appearance. It's much deeper."

Gordon laughed, "He doesn't sound dull, at any rate."

"That's one thing he's not," Elena agreed. "His own country is afraid of the publicity he would receive if he became too well known. They don't want to lose him to other countries or other organizations. Personally, he does—"

n't mind the lack of publicity. He prefers to devote his extraordinary powers to doing the most good. He's in constant demand by some of the archeological expeditions and has worked with European police to find missing persons or criminals. He feels that kind of work is important, rather than predicting the birth of a baby or the color of its eyes. He says that too many other people can do that."

"You said he'd gone back in time, Elena," Gordon reminded her. "Is that why you're telling us about him? Is he planning to go back in search of Damon?"

"No, he's not. Perhaps what I said was misleading. He doesn't go back into time the way that Damon did—physically. He mentally travels back; it's a different thing. I'm going to try to go back myself by combining his method with that used by Damon so that I can transfer mentally and materially."

"Elena, you can't be serious about that. You just can't," Percy protested. So that was what she was leading up to. Why hadn't Percy realized it all along. The information that she was gathering from Percy was to help her actually rematerialize herself in the time where she thought Aarons would be.

"Yes, I fully intend to. But you needn't worry. It's not a spur-of-the-moment impulse, and it's not because of jealousy over you. I've given it a great deal of thought and planning. I think I can accomplish it." There was not the slightest shade of doubt in Elena's voice. Quite the contrary, it was strong and determined.

"Does the institute know about this, Elena?" Gordon inquired. "Have you told them where Damon is?"

"No. The only one I've told about Damon is Dr. Saundre. I want to make the effort while he is in this country. That, I think, is very important. I think he will be helpful in some way."

"But suppose that, like Damon, you encounter the spirit of someone from the past and merge with that person to live her life; what if that woman will not release you when you wish to return?" Gordon questioned.

"Frankly, Gordon, I don't believe that will happen. I believe my mind is as stubbornly determined and my will as strong as anyone who has ever lived. I think I can safely survive such a struggle. Besides, I hope that won't

happen. I hope that I will be myself—with my own mind—when I arrive in the nineteenth century." She spoke with such boldness that it left no doubt as to the tenacity of her will, only the wisdom of her decision. But there was no shaking her firmness. She had made up her mind, and it was to happen.

"When do you plan to try—to go back into time?" Percy asked reluctantly.

"I can't say. I know it will be soon after I return to New York," she replied. "It will be when Raymond and I together sense that the time is right, I think. I have great faith in him. If—if anything should happen, that was not planned, I'm certain that he will be able to find me—to help me. I'm not worried about what I'm about to do, and I don't want either of you, nor Sam and Claire, to worry about it. Worrying won't help anyone. But do you still have the watch Damon gave you, Percy?" Elena asked.

"Yes, of course, I do," she replied.

"Then keep it with you all the time. I'm not asking you to give yourself as you did before. Now we know where he is, and I want you to help pull him back. Don't be pulled by him. You must try to make him feel that same tug-of-war that you felt when you were pulled back from Theodosia. When he has learned that you are here and well, then he will feel that pull, and he and I will come back together. Do you think you're strong enough to do that?" Elena requested.

Percy nodded her head and bit at her lower lip as Gordon gave her hand a reassuring squeeze. She hadn't touched the watch since she returned home from Charleston. She almost feared to, but now she would have to bring out the talisman and make as strong an effort as she could to help her friends. She was not happy about Elena's decision, but since there was no specific reason she could give that would stand up to Elena's fierce resolve, there was nothing she could do but allow her to go and hope for the best—hope for a quick return. Somehow, it was the thought of the return to the twentieth century that made Percy feel depressed—but whose return? Was it Damon's? Was it Elena's? Was it both? Or was it to be neither of them?

Chapter II

For Aaron Burr, New York City was a bleak and dismal place all during the winter of 1813; the weather seemed to reflect his innermost despair. But in spite of the harsh winds and cruel cold, frequently accompanied by stinging sleet or a heavy fall of snow, he ventured forth daily, shortly after he had dined, to pace back and forth along the Battery Walk at the tip of the island, relentlessly searching the horizon for the schooner *Patriot* in the vain hope that it had been unduly delayed in its voyage and that by some miraculous coincidence Theodosia would, at last, come tripping gaily down the gangplank to throw herself laughing into his waiting embrace.

Over and over in his mind he relived this joyous scene, but only in his mind. As the interminable gray days of January passed into the bleakness of February, which in turn gave way to the even grayer and more desolate days of March when only the hope of early Spring could offer cheer, he continued to take his daily promenade along the Battery, albeit his hope of seeing his daughter was dimmed as he was forced more and more to face the realization that the ship had been too long in its voyage. A matter of three weeks, at most, would have been a more than generous time to allow it to sail from Charleston to New York. It was now three months, and still there was no news of her. No ship reported sighting her. She was a victim of the sea, and with her all the passengers and crew. His

treasure, his beloved daughter, his sublime Theodosia—lost at sea.

Aaron Burr's life weaved itself into a pattern of despair mingled with desperate, futile hope and back again to bitter despair. The desire for his daughter's safety caused that hope to spring to life once more with each new rumor of her fate, only to be cast down again by the tale itself. In February, the news of Theodosia's disappearance could no longer be kept private, and the story concerning the wife of the Governor was printed in newspapers throughout South Carolina. Much fuss and dither was made over her possible fate because she was the First Lady of South Carolina at the time of her sailing. And as the news began to spread throughout the country, other papers quickly picked up the story to reprint and embellish it, not because Theodosia was the wife of South Carolina's Governor but because she was the daughter of the notorious and controversial Aaron Burr, former Vice-President of the country.

Rumors abounded and speculation grew and swelled and ballooned each report until it became so extended that there was difficulty recognizing a grain of truth in anything. Each story agreed that she had boarded the *Patriot* but after that point of agreement, they indulged in the wildest of possible speculations. The American public was titillated by this latest occurrence in the life of Aaron Burr and was having an enormously enjoyable time discussing and debating the fate of the beautiful Theodosia.

Some of the more persistent rumors asserted that the *Patriot* had been captured by the British and that Theodosia either had been taken captive and was being held aboard a British man-of-war on the high seas or that she had been taken captive to Bermuda where she was being held for ransom by the British. There were also rumors that the ship had been smashed to bits in a storm that raged shortly after it left the harbor and that wreckage had washed ashore at various sights along the Atlantic coastline.

Many such pieces of wreckage began to appear on display as evidence of this theory. Another rumor began to grow from this one which claimed that Theodosia had been the sole survivor of the wrecked ship and had clung desperately through the storm to a piece of floating debris

until she was, at last, washed ashore, weak and exhausted, but still alive. There on the beach she had been discovered and taken to a small cottage where she was nursed back to health. There she remained, even now, striving daily to recover her health. She had failed to contact her father regarding her whereabouts because she was suffering from amnesia. But those who told the story swore it was she.

Other versions of the same report maintained that she could no longer speak and therefore could not identify herself. The village in North Carolina could never be precisely located or identified. Thus was hope always followed by the most dismal despair as fate continued to play cruel games within the life of Aaron Burr.

Most intriguing of all the persistent rumors concerning Theodosia, and the ones that the people loved to repeat in the quiet darkness of night while sitting in the flickering lights and shadows cast by the comfortable fires in their hearths, were those which purported that Theodosia had been captured by pirates off the coast of the Carolinas. The *Patriot* it seems, had been the prey of one of the ships of the renegades which regularly roamed up and down the Atlantic coastline in pursuit of cargo and passenger ships. One version of this tale claimed that when the ship was taken by the pirates, all passengers on board, including the lady herself, her maid, and her escort—Dr. Greene—had been made to walk the plank. Theodosia, it was told, walked with the dignity of a queen pacing the royal carpet to her coronation, her head held high, shoulders erect, and with the slightest trace of a proud smile on her face. But as this story was repeated and embellished, another began to circulate of a schooner which had been captured off the coast of the Carolinas with a beautiful and cultured lady aboard who had so totally captivated the pirate leader that he had taken her to his island retreat on Hispaniola or another nearby island in the West Indies where she remained his concubine. Some even insisted that she had fallen in love with the dashing leader.

All of these rumors reached the ears of Aaron Burr. He could not avoid hearing—or overhearing—they repeated in the streets, in the taverns, even in the private homes of his most intimate and solicitous friends. At first, he clung to the hope they presented, but, slowly, he began to turn

from them, to avoid them, and in spite of his love for Theo and his desperate desire to have her alive and well, he finally was forced to dismiss all the rumors as being no more than foolish idle fancies. He was compelled to face the truth of two matters—that there had been a dreadful storm in early January in the ocean off the Carolina shore, and that Theodosia had still not arrived in New York Harbor. And yet . . . and yet . . . he stubbornly clung to the elusive hope that she would somehow return to him one day, and he continued his promenades along the Battery Walk each day that he was physically able, telling himself that it was to benefit his health and not to await his daughter. But he always searched the horizon for the sails and the masts of ships approaching the harbor.

One day, word arrived from England that a man-of-war had come upon the *Patriot* not far from the harbor of Georgetown. The British officers boarded and searched the vessel. Finding it was merely a passenger and cargo ship, and encountering onboard a Madame Theodosia Alston who possessed a letter of safe passage from the Governor of South Carolina, they allowed the ship to continue on its way to New York City. There was nothing further in the report from England to indicate the ultimate fate of the ship or the lady.

Theodosia's husband, Joseph, was much alone at "The Oaks," his prospering rice plantation in South Carolina, and he suffered no such hopes, no such illusions as did her father. Though he was surrounded by the comfort and solace of his large family, they were able to offer him no real comfort at all. They were the ones who forced him to face the reality of a ship lost in a stormy sea, a ship which carried all passengers aboard to the ocean floor. They reminded him that he was still young—young enough to marry again and to raise up the family of children Theodosia had not been able to give him. After all, he was still the Governor of South Carolina with a brilliant and promising political career ahead of him if he would but rally himself and pursue it.

That made him a most promising candidate for the hand of any southern lady who might happen to catch his fancy. But Joseph bore his sorrow alone, for he was unable to convey his depth of feeling or to describe how

tragic was the loss to him. There would never again on this earth be the like of Theodosia, whose value was beyond his power to reveal. The double tragedy which had befallen him, the death of his only son and the loss of his beloved wife, created an unbridgeable chasm between himself and his family.

He lost interest in life, in politics, and in his plantation. By mid-February, he had come to accept the fact that she was gone from him forever. In sorrow he wrote to her father, the one person who would understand the emptiness he felt. In the writing, he seemed closer than he had been to Aaron Burr at any time since that trying summer in Richmond, Virginia, when only the presence of Theodosia had helped them survive the trial for treason. Only someone who knew and loved her as he did, only her father, would understand what it meant to lose such a treasured being. Repeatedly he tried to share his sorrow, but it did not alleviate his grief. Repeatedly he tried to interest himself in things around him, but he could not seem to cease his mourning for his son and wife. At best, he could merely force himself to bear his affliction with the same quiet fortitude that Theo had borne her physical suffering and the separation from her father.

The halls of "The Oaks," which once echoed with the sounds of happy laughter of mother and son, were silent now as Joseph walked through them alone . . . too silent. He soon found his plantation home depressing, much too crowded with memories of happier days, which made him yearn for that which could never come again. Less and less time did he spend there, devoting his waking hours to seeking a balm in his duties as Governor, according to his father-in-law's suggestion . . . Work was to be his route back from the dead to the living, and he began to correspond with increasing frequency with Burr. But the work did not offer him the comfort he sought. Then, Joseph himself began to be plagued with ill health as his broken heart refused to be mended by any means.

Sympathy surrounded Aaron Burr, sympathy for the lost Theodosia. The resentful public at last relented and forgave him for the killing of Alexander Hamilton in a duel. It was almost never mentioned now, as though no one seemed to remember or to care. It had been a very

long time ago; and if he had sinned, surely that sin had been atoned by the loss of his daughter and grandson. The time had come to let the past rest peacefully in the grave.

Aaron Burr's law practice began to flourish and grow but not his zest for life. That seemed to vanish with his cherished daughter. He neither entertained nor allowed himself the luxury of being entertained. He no longer craved social engagements. Like his son-in-law, he sought solace in his work, but unlike Joseph, for Aaron Burr the solace was there. He devoted himself to the paying off of old debts which hung over his head. He dined well but cautiously, drank moderately, and began once more to dress with his old accustomed impeccable taste, but he did not squander more money than necessary on his appearance.

Burr lived in quarters above his law offices on Nassau Street, which were comfortable enough, but certainly not to be compared with the grand scale of living he had maintained at Richmond Hill. By the time the war with England ended in 1815, he had managed to pay off a large number of his outstanding debts. He took little interest in politics and tolerated the war with Britain as another burden to survive. He could not prevent a small enigmatic smile from creeping to his lips when he heard someone mention the dissatisfaction of the New England states and the possibility that they might decide to secede from the Union to form their own government. This discontent was of long duration, and possibly it would always remain. His mind flashed back to the years preceding the death of his friend Hamilton. New England had been on the verge of withdrawing from the Union even at that time and had invited Burr to become their leader, but that faded with his other worldly advances at the news of Hamilton's death. Now again, New England talked of withdrawing, but this time, no one approached him to suggest that he become in anyway involved. They did not even ask his opinion.

Damon Aarons suffered even greater mental anguish than did Aaron Burr. While Burr was still surrounded by a closely knit gathering of friends of long standing, Damon Aarons was miserably alone and uncertain, alienated in this time and this life. He should—and without question he could—return to the twentieth century if only he were

certain, if only he could find one positive shred of evidence that Percy was deceased. But could she possibly, miraculously, have managed to find her own way back to her other life? If that were the case, then he would happily and speedily return and be grateful to be again merely one personality. But as long as there was the smallest hint or suspicion that she might be alive here in this time as Theodosia, he did not dare risk the chance and leave, no matter how great his desire to return. And Burr, in some unguarded distant corner of his mind tenaciously clung to the faint hope that she had been taken captive by the British or some pirate ship, or mayhap she was truly the survivor of the shipwreck, washed ashore, and unable to find her way back to him in New York.

As loudly as he disavowed the rumors which continued to circulate with disturbing regularity, he could not bring himself to close the final door of hope for Theo's survival. He had been denied by a cruel fate of his honor, his political future, and his worldly possessions. And to deny himself the privilege of deceiving himself with the vain hope of seeing her once more, no matter the time or distance, would strip him of all reason to continue in life. And while that hope remained in the mind of Aaron Burr, however dim and unreasonable, Damon Aarons dare not risk leaving the nineteenth century.

Time passed without meaning—days into weeks and into years. Damon lost track of the days and the years. He survived and he waited—waited for a sign, a word. In the darkness of night, when Burr was asleep, Aarons' mind struggled to make contact with some of his friends from the twentieth century, hoping that through telepathy he might be able to discover the true fate of Percy Brooks. But always there was an empty feeling. He could reach no one, nothing—only uncertainty, doubt, and a lingering depression. Was there no one of his own time who still tried to reach him? No one who cared?

It was on just such a grim and wintry evening, quite late on a Saturday, that Damon Aarons became aware of a horrendous noise outside the window. At first, he feared a general uprising among the rabble, and he wished he were safely in his own apartment in his own life.

Aaron Burr wondered if the British had landed troops under cover of night, sneaking in from the harbor. So great was the noise from the street, he anticipated that there was in progress a surprise attack on the city of New York. He did not relish the prospect and made his way to the window to look down on the scene. The streets were filled with people; they rushed about, embracing each other, singing, shouting, bellowing to one another.

Suddenly, there was a great pounding on the door below. Burr threw open the window and shivered in the blast of frigid air which rushed to greet him. But his discomfort faded as he heard the words resounding from every corner, every window, every shop doorway. "Peace! Peace! The war has ended! PEACE!" As he stood watching the people rush about, jumping and hopping, dancing and shaking hands, and thumping each other on the back, he felt a glow of well-being sweep through him.

He had not been indifferent to the fate of his country, after all, he discovered; merely, he had been uninvolved; he had been excluded. He could not recall feeling so closed off from humanity, so entirely alone as he did at this moment. He longed to be among the throng, to be one with them in celebrating the unexpected treaty of peace with the British. He closed the window and turned his back to the scene. He would not go where he was not wanted, and it had been a very long time since the public had wanted his company. A tear threatened to make its appearance in the corner of his eye, but he would have none of such sentimentality. He drew himself up to his full height, his back ramrod straight.

The bells in the many church steeples began to ring separately and together in a triumphant cacophony of sound. How very odd, he thought, that those self-same bells which resounded such joy this night could peal with such melancholy timbre when mourning the dead. He turned again to gaze at the scene below him.

Mingled together with the happy shouts of the people, now he could hear the old campaign songs being sung by groups of men as they stood together, some with arms about each other or hands on shoulders, other groups merely standing without touching, facing one another and

singing boisterously. The jubilant church bells nearly drowned out the words, when over all came the roar of cannons being fired in the distance. A mere short day ago, the sound would have been sufficient to freeze the blood of everyone within earshot. Now, it but added emphasis to the joyous celebration. Everywhere could be heard cries of "Peace."

Aaron Burr could not resist the temptation to join in the celebration. Hastily, he drew on his waistcoat. Sitting on the side of his bed, he tugged and pulled at his boots. When finally they were on, he wrapped a warm woolen scarf round his neck to ward off the night chill, he slipped into his blue greatcoat, and adjusting his fur cap over his head, he took his buckskin mittens in hand and hastily left the house to make his way below to the teeming throng in the streets. He began to press and wind slowly through the milling, exuberant crowd toward Wall Street.

Under foot was a mass of rigid mud and dirty snow, formed into hard frozen deep ruts and ridges. It made walking both difficult and hazardous, but each time he slipped or swayed, he received assistance from the nearest man to him. At the corner, he stopped in amazement to watch a group of seven old men kneeling in the freezing filth to join in prayers of thanks to God for the newly proclaimed peace. Their voices were barely distinguishable, too subdued to be understood above the excited clamor, but the pious expressions they wore and the purpose of their behavior could not be misinterpreted. So intent were they on delivering thanks to their Lord and Savior that they were oblivious to the pigs which rooted about their legs in search of some new morsel of food or to the cackling of chickens awakened and aroused by the excitement, now flapping their wings and scurrying about. Dogs and cats ran aimlessly in all directions among the cheering people intent on celebrating. But those who passed by this small group of prayerful men paused for a moment in their revels to respect the emotions and unaffected simple gesture of worship before they made their way carefully about them so as not to disturb their prayer.

As he proceeded along Wall Street, Burr noticed several bonfires springing up, one on almost every third or fourth

corner, and the windows of the houses he passed seemed to blaze with the light from many candles placed there. In fact, the entire city seemed to be ablaze, much, he speculated, as the city of Washington must have appeared earlier during the very same war which had just come to such a successful end, when the nation's Capital City had been burned by the British. Aaron Burr smiled at the sight of the friendly bonfires. What an interesting element is fire, he thought. Like water, it can be both good and evil, depending on the intent in the hearts of men. Fire could revive a human life with warmth and could also take away that life. Water could aid a thirsty man but water could also claim a human . . . but he must not dwell on that this night. Feeling a chill, he walked a bit more briskly.

At the corner of Wall and Water Streets, he stopped beside one of the friendly bonfires to warm himself. He removed his mittens and stood with his hands over the fire, rubbing them together. Looking about, he studied the faces of the men who shared with him the comforting warmth of the blaze. One or two, he would judge, were gentlemen like himself. They were younger than he and quite pleasingly well dressed. The other four men, he took to be workmen—laborers—chatting merrily with everyone who chanced to stop by their fire. Quite probably, they had never spoken to one another before this night, and most probably when these six men met again, if indeed they ever did, they would have nothing to say to each other at that time. Great events are magnificent levelers of mankind, he thought to himself. In sorrow or joy we are all merely human beings. The group was joined by a young man, well-dressed and of pleasing countenance, who chanced to stand beside Aaron Burr.

Turning to the fellow, Burr addressed him. "Have you heard the terms of the treaty?" he asked.

"I know of no man who has heard the terms, sir, but it seems to matter not a whit to anyone at the moment. Peace is ours at last, and that is the importance of it all," the young man answered pleasantly. Then, more seriously, he added, "Perhaps there is some news of the terms at the Tontine," he could not resist laughing as he concluded, "that is, if you could manage to push through the door to discover it."

Burr returned his laughter. Indeed, the place would be crowded this night. "My thoughts precisely, sir," he agreed. "Yet, I feel that a glass of claret would not be amiss and might produce a more satisfying and universal warmth than even this fire. Would you care to join me there in a toast to our newly settled peace, no matter the terms?"

"A splendid idea, my pleasure indeed, sir," his companion agreed.

It was with considerable difficulty that the two men walked the short distance from the bonfire in the street to the Tontine Coffee House, impressively situated on that very corner. The Tontine was by far the largest and most important of the several coffee houses located along Wall Street. It served as the Stock Exchange as well, which was one of the reasons it was the very hub of activity among the traders and merchants who met there daily to conduct business and to check on the arrivals and departures of ships in the harbor. As the door pulled open and Burr and his young companion stepped inside, it seemed that every merchant, every trader, every businessman in the entire city of New York had descended on the Tontine to celebrate the peace with a tankard of ale or a glass of spirits.

"I would judge that your idea was more splendid than we realized, sir, for it seems that it is shared by every gentleman in the city," the young man said, and laughed with Burr.

The room was indeed crowded, uncomfortably so, and the idea suddenly lost its appeal for Burr. His eyes began to smart and sting with the blue-gray haze of smoke from the many pipes and cigars. Leisurely, it rose and swirled and seemed to hang about the heads of the laughing, noisy, boisterous men who crowded elbow to elbow within the confines of the taproom. The rancid odor of rum and ale, brandy, and port, mingled with the smoke, now stale, and the aroma of roasting meat, was most unpleasant to Burr. It suddenly seemed not worth the while to engage in a contest of struggling to secure a simple glass of claret and not be able to savor it when it was finally in hand. Burr turned again toward the door.

"I think I must leave this business of celebration to younger men; I seem not to have the stamina for it any longer," he said. "For my part, I shall return at some decent hour of the morrow to learn the terms of peace. I am much too old to wage a new battle for a glass of wine when victory is already ours and the battles are over and won," he mused.

His young companion was searching the room for some sign of a friend or acquaintance in spite of the fact that it was nearly impossible to recognize anyone more than three feet away through the haze.

"Perhaps another tavern would serve us better," the young man suggested. "Shall we attempt to rally an assault on Fraunces a few blocks distance, or shall we continue along the coffee houses here on Coffee House Row?"

"I fear, my dear sir, that the idea has quite lost its allure for me," Burr informed the young man beside him. "To persist would be to espouse a lost cause, a cause which would lead me to either a frustrating end or an all night carousal. I have suffered too many lost causes to pursue yet another, and I have lived too long to delight in all night carousing. I fear I shall have to leave you to whichever course you choose. I am now for home and the warm comfort of my own bed."

"Regretfully, I will take leave of you then, for you are correct in believing, sir, that my youth spurs me on, and I shall find a glass of spirits with which to salute the new era of peace before I shall sleep this night," the young man said. "But come, which way do you walk? I can at least accompany you for a small distance."

"I shall endeavor to make my troubled way toward Broadway, since it is larger than the other streets hereabouts; and there will surely be room for me to walk along there. Then I shall make haste to return home."

"In that case, I shall be your companion as far as Fraunces Tavern where, if it be not too overburdened, I shall stand my ground and refuse to move from the spot until I have received my glass of ale," said the young man.

Carefully, they picked their way along Water Street, and as they passed, Burr took note that there was now a bonfire on nearly every second corner in this particular part of the city.

"We can thank the merciful fates that there is no great wind tonight," he commented. "Can you envision what a tinderbox these wooden buildings would be if one should catch fire."

"Indeed so, sir. The city has barely recovered from the great fire less than four years ago. Can you remember anything more horrifying than watching the flames lick away at the buildings, or a greater act of bravery than when that one lone sailor saved the church?"

"I was in Europe four years ago . . . on a prolonged visit," Burr said, offering no more explanation. "I've heard some of the fire, but I was not a witness to it."

"It was an event to remember, sir, and you were well to miss it," said the young man. "It was early on a beautiful morning in May, a Sunday morning. No one knows exactly how it started, but it caught very quickly and spread rapidly, causing great damage—as this one would—to the wooden buildings. It broke out somewhere in Chatham Street, near Duane it is said, and they say it consumed nearly a hundred good buildings before it was at last brought under control."

"There was a wind that morning, which helped spread the flames and made it most difficult for the firemen to put out the blaze in one building before it leaped to another. The citizens ran to give aid, and every man who could carry a bucket of water sprang to assistance. I was there, helping to carry water and extinguish what of the fire we could. After a time, the fire had reached to the Brick Church—one of the sparks from a nearby building was carried on the wind and ignited its spire. But the spire was so far above the ground that no one knew what to do, and it seemed the whole church was in danger of being devoured by the flames."

"Suddenly, as we were staring at the burning spire, a sailor seemed to appear on the roof from truly nowhere. I know of no one who saw him climb to that position nor can I guess how he managed it, but he did. Then he began to climb up the steeple, hand over hand. The courage of the man was inspiring. He clung to the slender lightning rod, and that thin, rusty, piece of iron was his only refuge, his only aid as he made his way toward the part of the steeple which was ablaze. We watched from the safety of

the ground as he inched his way along, praying that he did not slip and fall. Yet all the while, I could not help thinking that even if he should reach the steeple, there was no way to give him aid. There was no way to get water to within his reach so that he might put out the fire."

"It appeared to be an insane gesture on his part, brave beyond words or not. What was in his mind, we could not fathom, until, at last, he was within reach of the fire. He grasped the lightning rod firmly with one hand, and taking the hat he wore in the other, he literally beat out the flames with it. When he had finished, everyone below, who had gathered to watch his progress, shouted great hurrahs. The shouting continued as he made his way slowly down again. Then, and perhaps this is most amazing of all, when he reached the ground, instead of receiving the praise and congratulations of all present, the fellow simply disappeared. He vanished into the crowd without a word. The city offered a reward the next day, but he never made himself known to claim it. Yet, I shall always remember and admire that brave, solitary sailor. Well, here we are, sir. Are you certain that you can not be persuaded to join me?"

"Thank you, young man, I think not," Burr said to his companion. "However, I have enjoyed your rendition, and I thank you for your pleasant company. Good night, sir."

The young man turned to face Burr and smiled at him in farewell. The street was somewhat darkened, making it impossible for him to see clearly the features of the older man. He extended his hand, which Burr took and shook amiably.

"A most enjoyable meeting for me, too, sir," said the young man. "Do you reside here in New York City, or have you a country home?"

Burr smiled a trifle at the question. A few years before he had both, but now only a few rooms. "I live here in the city," he said as he withdrew his hand and pulled on his mitten.

"Then surely we shall meet again, and soon. Are you a merchant?" The young man asked.

"Oh no, sir, nothing so lofty and industrious as that. I am merely a lawyer, practicing my trade in the courts here."

"Perhaps you knew my father. He would have been about your age, very close, I should judge. But no, you said you were in Europe for several years, so perhaps not. He was a lawyer of some reputation here in New York . . . and he was with the Government under Washington . . . although, I was too young to know much of it at the time. Or it may be that you knew my uncle. And my older brother is a lawyer here in the courts as well. He is to take my father's place, Mama says." The young man rambled a bit as he attempted to explain his family.

"Then perhaps if you tell me your name, it might serve to clear up the mystery of whether I knew your family," Burr suggested pleasantly.

"My name is John Church Hamilton, sir. I was named for my uncle, John Church. My father was . . ."

"Alexander . . ." Burr finished the sentence, softly murmuring the name.

"Why yes, did you know him?" asked the young Hamilton.

"Yes . . . yes, I knew him . . . slightly," said Aaron Burr quietly, turning abruptly and ducking his head further into the woolen scarf he wore. He made his way as rapidly as he could manage along Water Street away from the tavern.

"But your name, sir," called young Hamilton after the departing figure. "I did not learn your name—what is your name?"

Damon Aarons remembered unhappily the death of Hamilton, the incident which had brought him to this life and time. He continued walking until he found himself standing by the icy waters of the harbor at the tip of Battery Park, where he so often made his solitary walks in the afternoon. From habit, he began his deliberate pacing back and forth, his eyes turned toward the water where the ships lay at anchor, rather than toward the excitement that he had just left. He was unaware of the dark figure of a man standing beneath a tree not fifty feet from him watching as he approached. When he drew near, the man stepped forward.

"I thought you might eventually arrive here, Aaron," said the man. "I've been waiting for you."

Peering sharply at the face in the darkness, Burr recognized his friend, Sam Swartout.

"When I discovered what all the commotion was about, I stopped by your rooms to tell you of the peace. I found you had slipped out and rather than search about the town for you, I determined to wait here. I supposed that you would sooner or later wander here, and you see, I was right. Here you are, but you have been long in coming. And it has been a cold watch for you."

"I'm sorry, Sam," Burr said. "Had I suspected, I would have come directly that I might be the one to wait for you instead. But now you must have a glass of spirits for your trouble. That will warm you, I say. But it must not be at one of the coffee houses or taverns. They are impenetrable. Would you care to join me at my quarters. I shall try to dispense hospitality with a generous hand."

"But I came to fetch you. You must accompany me. John waits at my house, and Matt Davis, Bollman, a few others, all good friends. We felt the gathering was incomplete without you at such a time."

"I would, indeed, welcome a bit of comradeship tonight, Sam. I shall confide to you and to none other, I am somewhat overtaken with melancholy and do not care for my solitary company at this moment. The company of another, a young man with whom I spent some time in conversation, has filled me with an even greater melancholy. You are hereby assigned the task of reviving my sagging spirits. How I long to be with Theodosia. She could ever cheer me with her clever wit—you know how dear she was to me. While I was in exile in Europe, we were parted, but she was still on this earth, still living. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult for me to convince myself that she is no longer here. From our last meeting that night before I sailed, I never saw her, but I knew she was here and there was always the expectation of seeing her again. Although, I tell myself that she surely must be dead, I can not rid myself of the hope that I will even now see her once more. And tonight above all, it has rendered me saddened."

"Then I shall myself undertake to dispel that melancholy, my friend. Come, the others are far ahead of us in number of glasses drained to the bottom." He put his hand

lightly on the shoulder of his friend and together they began to walk away from the water.

"I will show you the other cause of my unhappy state, Sam, if you will swear to keep it locked within your own thoughts," Burr said, looking hard at his friend. Sam nodded solemnly.

"Quite by accident, I have been in the company of young John Church Hamilton. We shared the warmth of a bonfire and neither recognizing the other, became engaged in conversation. He represents himself as a most amiable young man. I was much taken with him and his manner. Does it not seem a sad fate to you that there are so many hale and healthy Hamilton children with no father to love and care for them, while here is a father with love to give and no children left him to love. What melancholy! What irony—is it not?" Burr inquired, expecting no answer.

Sam, shrewdly realizing that the question was not addressed to him, rather to the universe in general, made no attempt to reply. But he quickened his steps toward the warm house and the convivial company awaiting them.

Damon Aarons remained deeply disturbed and melancholy clung to his thoughts. Would that he could leave this miserable existence—but he could not bring himself to do so. He could not absolve himself of responsibility toward Percy, for whom he yearned with a personal hunger as well. He must remain until there was some proof of her fate. It was as difficult for him to accept the possibility that he might not see her again as it was for Burr to realize the same of Theodosia.

Chapter III

Elena reached out a freshly manicured hand and switched the button of the cassette to "off." The tape of her conversations with Percy had just run its course. She flicked the button to rewind the tape and leaned back in her chair.

"Well, Raymond, what is your opinion of all that?" she asked her companion. She studied him as he raised his eyes from the cassette to meet hers, smiling quizzically as he so often did.

"You are positive that the young woman is telling the truth? This is not a creation of her imagination—a fantasy?" he asked.

"No, I believe everything she said happened as she described it," Elena assured him.

"Not a dream—a hallucination? You said she was injured at the time."

"No, Raymond, no. Nothing like that at all."

"But, Elena, it's so hard to believe—even for one of my own experience," he said. "I've been able to travel back into history many times, yes, but not like this. I've never actually lived through it as she insists she did—still, I can not say positively that it's not possible." He nodded his head thoughtfully.

"Damon Aarons did it, and I'm certain that he's still there living the life of Aaron Burr," Elena reminded him.

"Yes, I know, I know," Dr. Saundre said, still deep in thought. "And you want me to help him, is that it, Elena?"

"I want you to help me, Raymond," she told him. "I need your help. I need your advice, and most of all, Raymond, I need your support. I've been trying to prepare myself so I'll know what to expect. I already know what I'm going to do."

"You know I'll be happy to aid you and your friend in any way I can, Elena. I've never transferred through time in the way that Damon Aarons did, but there's no reason why I should not be able to attempt it. Although, I must admit that I do not look forward to it." In a thoughtful mood, he pressed the tips of his fingers together and placed them beneath his chin as he contemplated how to phrase his next statement. "But don't you suppose that when he realizes this Mrs. Percy Brooks is no longer in that time—don't you think he will return to his own life by himself?"

Elena shook her head. "You don't know this man," she said. "His sense of responsibility, his conscience, would never allow him to make such a serious decision until he knew without any doubt that Percy was no longer there, until he was convinced that she was really here. And if you read something about Aaron Burr, you'll find that rumors of Theodosia Burr's fate were still circulating many years later. Her father held onto the hope of seeing her for a very long time. Periodically, he would become encouraged that she might have survived and suffered amnesia. Knowing that is the truth and knowing that Damon Aarons shares the thinking of Aaron Burr, I don't think it very likely that he will return by himself."

"You know him, Elena—I do not," Raymond replied. "You must decide."

"We also know that time travels at a very different rate from what we know here. Who can tell how far advanced in life Burr might be at this very minute? Somehow, we must get to him to prove to him that Percy has returned and is well. Then he'll be free to return also."

"Tell me, Elena, who else knows what has happened to Dr. Aarons? Who else can be of assistance?" Saundre asked.

"No one at the institute knows, but the people in Iowa do, and there are two people, friends of Damon's, here in the city who also know," she replied.

"Don't you intend to tell anyone at the institute about this?" he questioned.

"Not until I have returned, then I will." In answer to his startled look, she said, "Surely you must have guessed that's what I've been planning. I've decided to go back in time the same way Damon did."

He rose to protest, as she knew he would, but she was prepared for his arguments. She had been through both sides, all the pros and cons, many times and was ready to refute every objection he brought up. The argument was a long one, a frustrating and futile one. Elena had made a firm decision before she approached the subject to her friend, and he could find no way to dissuade her. She knew the danger involved. He feared that she might not reach Damon Aarons, and even if she did, there was no guarantee they would be able to return. It was very risky and uncertain.

"Raymond," she said at last, "enough. Enough. Let me tell you why I decided it must be this way. I think you will agree with me then."

"Elena, I will never agree that you should try this. I will make the attempt instead. I have had a little more experience than you with the past, and I believe that you'll agree that my sensitive powers are more developed than yours."

"That's all true, but hear me out, Raymond. I'm not a young woman anymore." She held up her hand against his protest. "I admit I don't think of myself as being old, but I've reached middle age—can we agree on that?"

"Very well, Elena, early middle age. But you are still a most attractive woman. You must not do this thing if it represents a kind of sacrificial suicide to you and you think your life is finished. You have much to live for—many years ahead of you."

"No, I have no suicide complex, Raymond. I want to live as much as anyone. But I've reached this age . . . this middle age . . . without accomplishing anything beyond the ordinary. I'm not married. No one depends on me, I have no ties. I am in no way an exceptional person. I would not be missed. And as my life is going now, there is no expectation that I will ever be an exceptional person or ever do anything of great importance. So if I fail, there

will be no great void in the world . . . as there would be if you were to go back into time and to fail to return."

Again he started to protest, but again she raised her hand to silence him.

"Now, hear me out. This is an opportunity for me . . . an opportunity to do something fantastic, truly fantastic. If I succeed, I will have accomplished something that no one else in history has ever done, and I will be important in a small way. I will have a small niche in history. I will matter. And I want to matter. I want to have some share of fame and fortune. My life will have more meaning, more pleasure than it does at present. You are already important, you know that. I need to know that I am, too."

Raymond nodded his head as he considered what she had said.

"And I would like to be the one to bring Damon Aarons back. I want to be with him again. I would like him to need me." Elena rose and stood in front of Raymond Saundre. "I suppose what I really want is to belong somewhere to something or somebody. I need that. At this point in my life, I need to find where I belong."

Raymond Saundre rose and put his hands on her arms as he looked into her face, so serious, so intent. "I would like to tell you that you belong with me, Elena . . . but I . . ."

"No, Raymond. We are good for each other, and we are fond of each other, but it is not that deep, for either of us, yet. It may never be. But for me it has been a deep feeling for Damon Aarons. I have loved him. I must do all I can to help him return, and then we shall see what comes of anything afterward."

"Then I will help you in whatever way I can," he told her.

With a cry of relief, she embraced him. "Oh, Raymond, thank you. Thank you. This is something that I must *must* do. And you must give me time to accomplish it before you tell anyone else at the institute. If I fail to bring back Damon, I would not mind that you know, but I would hate to have everyone there know, too." She shrugged slightly. "Vanity, I suppose. It's not so much that I mind failing, but it's having the world know that I failed that would bother me."

"You're a strange woman, Elena, so full of confidence, and yet so lacking it at the same time." He said, "Do you mean that I am to bear this awesome secret by myself, then? What am I to do if I must return to Egypt, if my own organization calls for me?"

"I intend to write a letter to Dr. Friedrichson at the institute. I'll give it to you, and in two weeks time, or when you must leave—but not before two weeks—if I have not returned, you may give it to him. It will explain what has happened."

"For some reason, I dislike this business, Elena. I can't yet tell you why, but I'm unhappy about it. When I discover what the problem is, I'll explain to you."

"Are you giving me a warning, Raymond?" she asked.

"I can't even tell you that, Elena," he replied, as he prepared to leave.

"Remember that we're having dinner with Damon's friends, Sam and Claire White. They would like us there around seven-thirty," she said.

"Then I will be at your apartment promptly at seven. I look forward to meeting them. I must have someone to share this with," he said as he left her office.

Later that evening they listened again to the tape that she had made of Percy's conversations. Sam and Claire were hearing it for the first time.

"What a fantastic experience for Percy to live through history as she did," said Sam when it was finished.

"But poor Percy had such a dreadful time of it," remarked Claire, as she carried a large pewter tray holding the coffee service into the room. "It's all right for you and me to think of it as being exciting, but how awful it was for her, trying to make it possible for Damon to come back but being too ill to do it. I would love to talk with her about Theodosia Burr, but I doubt if she would care to remember any more than she has to. Anyway, Elena, thank you for letting us listen to the tape. It was fascinating."

"Thoughtful of you, Elena," agreed Sam. "We never would have known what happened if you hadn't. We couldn't possibly ask Percy directly. She's been through a terrible time of pain and anxiety."

"It certainly tells us what we wanted to know about Da-

mon," Elena replied. "Bringing him back should be a bit easier now. He's somewhere in New York, we're sure of that much, and living in some time after 1813. So all of Percy's sufferings—and I don't mean to belittle them by any means—have not been meaningless."

"What is your reaction to all of this, Dr. Saundre?" Sam asked. "Does it seem hard to believe?"

"Not at all, Mr. White. Going back in time is nothing new to me. I've done it many times—not in the same way that your friend Damon Aarons did, however, but in my own way, I've experienced something similar. Each person with developed psychic powers must use those abilities in his own manner. Some of us are more successful at one technique while other psychics find that our energies work best in another direction. I, for instance, have never dealt with ghosts, as your friend Dr. Aarons did. I don't know how I would have dealt with this particular case. But when we encounter someone like Mrs. Brooks, I find that I am astonished. Her gift is unique because what she accomplished was not through a developed psychic ability but through an instinctive one."

Sam and Claire had liked Raymond Saundre immediately, and he seemed to feel very comfortable with them. Over the delightful dinner Claire served, they were pleased to discover they shared many interests in common. When she learned that Raymond was from Egypt, Claire revealed that she had long been fascinated by ancient Egypt and its culture, its archeology. The same had been true of Raymond. He explained that some of his earliest attempts to go back into history had been to witness the life in ancient Egypt. They also shared an interest in ancient Greek and Roman culture. But Claire laughed when Raymond suggested she might have lived a previous life in the area of the Mediterranean. She found the world of the occult an amazing and enthralling one, but she wasn't quite ready to believe in reincarnation—at least not just yet—not for herself at any rate.

But she made no attempt to resist when he reached across the table to take her two hands in his. He held them without speaking as he looked deeply into her eyes, searching for something there. As she watched, his own eyes grew very black and seemed to turn endlessly deep.

Slowly he opened her hands and turned his eyes to them. He held them with their palms turned upwards, and he studied them for a long time. He smiled quizzically and said, "You were Egyptian, my dear, a long time ago." There was something in his manner that convinced Claire he was right. She was eager now to hear what he had to say about their friend Damon.

"Dr. Saundre, do you plan to go back into time to find Damon Aarons?" Claire asked.

"No," replied Saundre, shaking his head. "I don't believe I shall."

"But—why—why not?" Claire stammered. She had been so certain he would.

"He's going to help me go back," Elena responded. There was no comment from either Sam or Claire, only amazement on their faces. "He's going to help me," she repeated. "I'm going back in time to help Damon return."

The reaction in the room could not have been greater if she had announced that she was about to fly to the moon with her own two wings. Neither Sam nor Claire was prepared for this announcement. She had no experience to allow her to try such a thing. While it was very brave, it seemed incredibly foolhardy.

"But, Elena, you can't—you can't do it," objected Sam when he had recovered from the shock.

"I think I can. I wouldn't attempt it if I weren't positive I could do it," replied Elena calmly.

"Elena, there must be some other way," protested Claire. "Remember what a dreadful time Percy had."

Elena reached for Raymond's hand and patted it reassuringly. "I'm more fortunate than Percy. I have Dr. Saundre to help me. Percy only had me to help her. But besides that, what you don't know is that I have traveled back through time in the same way that Raymond has. When we were working together in Egypt, he taught me. Now, I admit it is not the same way that I plan to try now, but I have had some experience with the past."

"Yes, that's true; I taught her to go back mentally," Dr. Saundre agreed.

"But I thought that Dr. Saundre—well, I thought since he has had so much experience with the past, and that he seems to have exceptional sensitive powers, that he would

be the logical choice. I don't understand why you are going to try instead of him, Elena," Claire protested.

"Allow me to explain, Mrs. White," Dr. Saundre said.

"I wish you would because I agree with Claire," replied Sam.

Raymond stood, thinking of how he should start. Then he folded his hands behind his back and began to talk in a quiet voice, half to himself and half to those in the room.

"The decision is not as rash as it must seem to you when you first hear it," he began, choosing his words with particular care. "And I would not wish you to think that I agree with Elena because I fear to go myself. The decision is not based on cowardice on my part. We have discussed this carefully, Elena and I. I could go back into history to find your friend, Dr. Aarons, as I have done before. I could hover above the scene and tell you exactly and in detail what was happening to him. But I have never investigated the transfer of matter through thought, which is what he accomplished. I know nothing about that psychic experience. Elena has at least witnessed what Damon Aarons had accomplished with his experiments at the institute, so she actually knows more about that field than I do. Therefore, I would judge that her chances of completing such an experiment would be at least equal to, and perhaps even slightly above, mine.

"However, should I make such an attempt and succeed, should I actually become a man living in the early nineteenth century, and should I make the acquaintance of Dr. Aarons, he would not know me. He would have no reason to believe or to trust me. Who can say how much time would be spent in trying to gain his confidence. Whereas, if Elena were to make the same attempt and succeed, Dr. Aarons would recognize her immediately. She would not have the problem of winning his trust, and they would be able to assist one another. After he has learned the fate of Mrs. Brooks, he will feel free to return to his own life with Elena. It seems the most plausible solution and one that holds danger for her, true, but should anything go amiss, I would be here to give assistance. She is most eager to make the effort."

There was something about the plan that disturbed Claire. "Elena," she suggested, "don't you think it's time

for you to go to someone at the institute and explain what has happened? Let them decide what should be done now."

"No, I can't, Claire. I understand why you feel that you have to discourage me from making this attempt. But our lives are so totally different, yours and mine. This..." She rose and with a sweep of her hand indicated the room, the house and Sam. "This and your happy marriage represent an accomplishment in life. You have all this... and you have each other. You have someone here who needs you, someone who depends on you for happiness and fulfillment. You belong. That's it. You belong to each other and you belong here. You're very fortunate, and I envy you. I have none of this belonging. I am more than halfway through my life, and I have no one. I have nothing to show for it either in the way of accomplishments or possessions. I have a few friends, and for them I am grateful. But is this all that there is to be to my life? Is this the most I can expect?"

"I've always hungered for some great accomplishment... for fame of some kind. And I can't deny that I would like to have money, too. I don't expect to have all of that, but something, anything... to accomplish something truly spectacular, to leave my mark on some occurrence, some event... even if it's known by only a few. What a marvelous thing that would be! And now I have that opportunity. At least, I think I do. A special opportunity. I don't know if Damon ever truly loved me, but I loved him. I always thought that in time what he felt for me would grow and deepen. I always hoped that we would marry, but... well, that could never happen if he didn't return. Now I have the chance to help him return to this time—to me, perhaps. In my entire life, I will never have another such opportunity. Would you really expect, would you even encourage me to turn my back on this chance... on Damon? What would the rest of my life be like if I did?"

"Oh, Elena, I had no idea you felt that way," said Claire clutching Sam's hand.

"I don't know what to say, Elena, except to wish you great success," said Sam.

"Dr. Saundre, why do I feel so uneasy about it?" Claire asked him.

"You are wise and you are sympathetic," he replied. "It's natural for you to feel uneasy about such an unnatural undertaking, Mrs. White."

"Oh, please don't call me that. If we're to be friends, and I feel we will be, let's make it first names, can we, Raymond?" she requested.

"That would be nice . . . Claire," he replied with an especially warm smile.

"Don't you think the institute would allow you to go, Elena?" Sam asked. "You've been familiar with this since the beginning. You're the logical one."

"If I told them at the institute about this," Elena replied, "there would be a lot of different opinions and discussions before they went into action, and I feel—and Raymond agrees with me on this—that time is very important. It must be done immediately. Time may be passing so quickly that Aaron Burr's life may end before the institute began to act. That is as great a risk as I propose to take."

"But what—what if you fail?" Claire hated to think about the possibility, but it had to be faced.

"I've given Raymond a document which he can deliver to Dr. Friedrichson. It explains everything that has happened since the disappearance of Angie. I've given them your names and Percy's name and how to get in touch with her, also Angie. I know they'll want to verify the story rather than take the letter at face value, and I didn't want to leave Raymond alone to face them."

"Is there any way that we can persuade you not to do this thing, Elena?" asked Sam.

"No, Sam, there's no way. I've made up my mind," she replied quite firmly.

"When do you plan to attempt this thing, Elena?" Claire wanted to know.

"I would like to try now," replied Elena without the slightest hesitation.

"You mean tonight?"

"Yes, tonight." Turning to Raymond, Elena asked, "Don't you think it's a good time, Raymond?"

"Yes, I believe it is. But even I am surprised, Elena. I had no idea . . ." he answered.

"We're all here together. Why not? Why wait?"

Raymond closed his eyes briefly, then glanced upwards. "Yes," he said, "there are good rhythms among the group. This might be a good time for you, Elena."

"Well, I suppose if you're serious about it, naturally, we'll do whatever we can to help," Claire said.

"Raymond, do you think that I should try to select a year?" Elena suggested. "Perhaps it would help to fix on a year."

Raymond nodded, uncertainly. "It might."

"What year?" she asked. "If Theodosia disappeared early in 1813, it might be—oh, 1820 by now—or even 1825."

"Try that," suggested Raymond. "Try 1825." Then abruptly, he straightened up, leaving the wall against which he had been leaning and grabbed Elena roughly by the arms. "Listen to me, Elena. Listen to me carefully. Whatever you do, do not attempt to live through the life of someone else.—Whatever happens, you must, MUST—MUST NOT—live as someone else."

"I won't, Raymond," she said, startled by his behavior. "I never planned to."

"That is no matter . . . what you intend to do is no matter. At all costs, you must avoid some restless spirit who would use your body. That is the greatest danger, Elena. Come back; I beg you to come back, if that should begin to happen. I will help you if you resist it. But that must not happen!" His tone was insistent.

"Raymond, you needn't worry," she said comfortingly. "I won't let it happen. I have a very strong will of my own. I don't believe any spirits would want to tangle with it. I'm sure to be the stronger of the two."

"I hope that is true, but remember that I am here to help you," he said. "I would protect you, Elena, if I could, but you have a restless soul." Then he raised her two hands to his lips and kissed them with tenderness. Turning back to Sam and Claire White, he said, "I would like to move four simple chairs into a circle. I will sit on one side of Elena and Claire may sit on the other. Sam will sit opposite her. We will not hold hands or touch each other. We will communicate with our minds."

When the chairs were arranged to his satisfaction, they sat down as he directed, folded their hands in their laps

and closed their eyes in order that their concentration would not be disturbed.

Dr. Saundre's voice was low and persuasive: "The time is 1825—1825 in New York City. Picture in your minds a street in New York in 1825 and see Elena on that street. Will her into the picture in your mind."

Elena began to breathe very deeply, very quietly. She continued to relax for several minutes before she began to project herself into that other time in the city. She could see a lovely autumn day. Leaves on the trees were turning from the bright summer green to a yellow golden amber. A few leaves lay scattered about the grassy plots, still green. The sun was brilliant in the sky, and she could almost feel the warmth of it. Then she noticed that there were people. She watched as the ladies in their long-skirted dresses hurried down the dirty streets to buy fish from the cart of the fishmonger on the corner. Through a shop window she saw one woman examining a bolt of printed muslin. A small group of young ladies strolled by together, their pace leisurely, busily engaged in conversation.

A sign in the shape of a boot hung above one shop and caught her eye. She concentrated on seeing herself standing before the shop window. Slowly, the outline of a woman's figure began to appear. It was hazy at first but grew more and more defined until she could tell that it was the figure of a mature woman about her own age. Her heartbeat quickened. The woman was wearing a dress of brilliant Nile-green tied about the waist with a broad sash of striped ribbon. A small fichu, colored *café au lait*, was tied casually about her throat and was fastened with a small pin the shape of a golden arrow. On her head was a bonnet of the same color, which flattered the dark auburn hair showing beneath. It was the color of the hair which struck Elena. It was the exact color of her own. She struggled to release herself, to float, to drift, to pass through the dark tunnel of time. She focused her mind on the features of the woman. They would be hers, she knew; and when she saw them, the rest of her materialization would be complete. She waited to feel a newness of spirit, certain that she was the woman. As the figure began to turn, Elena recognized clearly that the features were not hers but those of someone else. For a minute, she was un-

certain because there was a perplexing resemblance, but the face was not hers. She had not succeeded. In spite of her certainty, she had failed. She redoubled her efforts to change the features to her own and could almost believe that they were when she remembered Raymond's plea.

"Whatever happens, you must, **MUST—MUST NOT—live as someone else.**"

She did not dare. She released her mind to return to her own body as the scene began to vanish into shadows. The experience had been exhausting, and she slowly opened her eyes.

At almost the same instant, as though he had received a signal from somewhere, Dr. Saundre also opened his.

"I know, Elena. I saw what happened, but I was powerless to change it. There was danger to you there. But I believe you were very close, and you may take pride in that."

She nodded her head and with her two hands, massaged her aching temples.

"It's more difficult than I thought," she said, her voice not quite hiding the disappointment she felt.

"Elena, you can't blame yourself because you failed," Claire said in a voice hesitant and subdued.

"But Damon is no closer to returning now than before I began," Elena reminded them.

"Don't let this one experience disturb you, Elena," Raymond said, his voice steady, trying to soothe her. "He will return. I am certain of that."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Raymond, because I'm no longer so certain of it. I tried . . . I tried . . . but there was no more of me to give."

"It may be, Elena, that no one can do what Damon Aarons has done," Sam suggested. "It may be that he is the only person to unlock the key to traveling back through time to live in the past. Perhaps we are going about this the wrong way. Perhaps we should be trying something else."

"What would you suggest, Sam," Elena confronted him.

"It seems that there are only two alternatives," he replied. "Either Raymond must try in spite of all the arguments to the contrary, or you must go to the institute."

"Either way, we will lose valuable time—time that we can not really afford to lose," Elena objected.

"But even more time could be lost if we do not," said Raymond, and Elena knew that he was right. Still, she could not bring herself to give up her hopes.

Chapter IV

Aaron Burr finished his meal of "bald eagle shot on the Grouse Plains of Long Island" and downed the final portion of claret from his glass. As he dabbed neatly at his mouth with the generous-sized white linen napkin, William Niblo, the restaurateur approached him, smiling pleasantly.

"Ah, Colonel Burr, how flattering it is to have you return to my establishment. A man of your reputation as a gourmet is always gratifying to serve. I hope you found the meal to your satisfaction."

"A good day to you, Mr. Niblo. What a welcome change it is to dine here occasionally. One grows tired of the usual roast beef and wild turkeys or mutton available elsewhere, and you offer a most pleasant alternative to such standard fare."

"What was it you selected from our specialities today?" Mr. Niblo inquired.

"I had my first taste of a bald eagle—and quite enjoyable, I must tell you that, sir. However, you did tempt me with your offering of buffalo tongues from Russia. That must be most rare. Unfortunately, as I grow older, I find that the adventure of youth—both in food and in undertakings—seems to be slipping away from me. I enjoy diversion and change, but certain new thrills are beyond my desire. So I fear that my reputation for the love of fine food is a remnant from my past and no longer wholly deserved." Burr smiled wryly.

"Believe it or not, Colonel Burr. A trained palate will

always respond to the exceptional in food just as the eye of a man, no matter what his age or condition, will always respond to the sight of an especially attractive young female, am I not right, colonel?"

"I can not argue that point, Mr. Niblo. It is truth, and therefore, I concede that you've won the debate," replied Burr laughing.

"Ah, 'tis a pity you were not here to dine yesterday, colonel. We had an offering which would have perked the most flagging appetite, and it is not soon to be repeated, I warrant." The owner of the restaurant spoke with great pride, for he did, indeed, enjoy his reputation of providing gourmet fare which could be found nowhere else in the entire rapidly growing city. In addition to the usual fare of roast and boiled meats and game and fowl, his menu was certain to include such original offerings as a "remarkably fine Hawk and Owl, shot in Turtle-Grove, Hoboken"; a raccoon; a six-foot wild swan, as well as the bald eagle which had so pleased Aaron Burr or the buffalo tongues imported from Russia which had tempted him.

"And what was yesterday's unusual offering, Mr. Niblo?" asked Burr.

"I can describe it to you, but you should have been here to witness it in its full glory, colonel. The presentation of such a delicacy is half the enjoyment. But I shall tell you, and you will picture in your mind the sight and the astonishment of the assemblage. At ten minutes before the hour that I had appointed it should be ready, after conferring with my chief cook, I had an announcement made throughout the restaurant. 'Clear the passage! Here comes the bear!' Immediately after, there followed, on an enormous platform, a huge bear that one of my agents had been able to procure. It was still smoking hot and was brought to the dining room whole and standing upright. It was a most impressive sight, and the response from the diners was well worth the effort. There was a gasp of 'ohs' and 'ahs' throughout the room, followed by a wave of enthusiastic applause. Some few gentlemen even insisted on inspecting it to make certain that it was not fabricated in some way. I do believe it is the highlight of my career as a caterer thus far." Niblo was fairly aglow as he terminated the narrative of his triumph.

Burr clapped his hands in delight. "Had I but known, I surely would have been among those present for the performance. But you must promise that if you repeat the episode, I am to be promptly sent for. I would not wish to miss it a second time, Mr. Niblo. But the bald eagle was most tasty and satisfying, an excellent repast in every way, and will serve to carry me through many a simple meal until I return." Rising from the table, he said, "A hearty good day to you, Mr. Niblo—and do not forget that you have promised to alert me the next time you serve up a great bear."

"I shall most certainly do so, Colonel Burr, and a good day to you also, sir." Mr. Niblo made his way across the room to a group of men in the process of finishing their meal as Burr paid for his meal and departed from the restaurant. The Old Bank Coffee House was occasionally a most delightful change from his habit of dining simply and austere. There were newer establishments of a sort that was known as a "short-order house" where one could eat a meal in a great rush. He had tried it one time and found it depressing rather than relaxing or stimulating. It seemed that there was a horrendous clatter of knives and forks, and not a word was spoken by any of the guests among themselves unless they had arrived in the company of each other. Only the orders were spoken, or rather shouted from one end of the room to the other, creating a dreadful din. No, the new restaurant style was not for such as Aaron Burr. He desired dining with a certain elegance and Continental grace.

He looked about him as he stood on the corner of Pine and William Streets. The day was fine and sunny, the weather mild and pleasant. Adjusting his coat, he turned to walk briskly down William Street, smiling and tipping his hat to the ladies he passed, but he was careful to acknowledge the gentlemen only if they first spoke or nodded or in some other way acknowledged him. He was too well aware that there were still those who would prefer not to associate with him. At Beaver Street he turned to the right and began to stroll a bit more leisurely toward the Battery for his afternoon walk there. It had become a habit by now, he had no real hope any longer that the *Patriot* would sail safely into port, but then he could not

completely quell the hope that Theo might still be alive somewhere.

Burr walked the short distance of Market Street toward the water, then he turned and began his promenade, walking with measured step, gazing out toward the horizon, stopping to stare into the distance or to watch a seagull swoop down upon the water. He was lost in thoughts, private and intimate; sometimes they were of a civilization far in the future, he was sure, thoughts which puzzled him. Sometimes he was overcome with a passionate desire for Theodosia which drove all reason from his mind. He was lost in this private world of his own making as a most attractive woman stopped in front of him and spoke his name.

"Colonel Burr, I'm sure it is," she said.

He would have bumped against her had she not held out a restraining hand. Only then was he aware of her presence. "I beg your pardon, madam," he murmured.

"Why, Colonel Burr, do you not recall me? It has been many years since we met—but we did meet at one time, and I have followed your career with great interest ever since."

For the first time, he looked at her with some interest, and immediately recognized the famous—or infamous, he corrected himself—Madame Eliza Bowen Jumel. Yes, they had met years ago when she was merely Eliza Bowen, the most beautiful woman in New York City, but of questionable virtue. Since then, she had married an extremely wealthy wine merchant named Stephen Jumel. The matrons of the city delighted in gossiping about her every escapade, her every attempt to establish herself as one of them, but they considered her unfit for their company, only fit for their idle hours of gossip. Instantly, he removed his hat and made a polite and very proper bow. "Madame Jumel, of course I remember our meeting. One does not forget a lady of such beauty as you were—forgive me—as you are." His practiced eye swept quickly over her still shapely figure. She was now in her fifties, he would judge, and although she was not as slender as she had been in her younger days, she was still a woman of more than common attractiveness. She knew how to make the best of her appearance, and she dressed with excep-

tional taste, having been instructed in the salons of Napoleonic France, or so it was rumored.

She was wearing a costume which had unquestionably been purchased recently because it was fashioned with the newly popular leg-of-mutton sleeves and full skirt. With it she wore a large leghorn hat, the brim of which was cut at the back and caught up with a large bow of white ribbon. A rosette was placed over the right ear and the white strings were tied under her still firm chin. Small curls of her brilliant auburn hair showed about her face beneath the hat. She could easily have deceived about her age, and no one would have guessed at the deception.

"My dear madame, what a pleasant surprise it is to see you again, and to know that you remember our meeting after so many years. I, too, have followed your career with great interest. I don't believe I have ever congratulated you on your most advantageous marriage."

"Thank you, colonel. I was not aware that you were apprised of my marriage." Her response was delivered with coyness.

"What a great injustice you do yourself, My dear Madame Jumel," Burr told her. "All New York is aware of almost your every move. Why, it's barely possible for you to produce a sneeze without the news being picked up and gossiped about in the very best social circles."

"Ha, Colonel Burr; if that is so, I fear it is as intimate as I shall ever become with 'the best social circles' of this city," she replied, unable to keep a bitter harshness from shading her tone.

"That, my dear madame, is society's loss, not yours," he replied with a gallant bow.

A smile crinkled her mouth, and her eyes sparkled at the compliment. Eliza adored flattery.

"I had heard it said you were abroad—Paris, I believe," he remarked. "I am surprised to see you here at the Battery Walk. Have you recently returned or am I in error?"

"Yes, I was in Paris—for several years I was there, but I have now just returned with my daughter, Mary Eliza. She has finished her studies at the school there, and Stephen asked that we come back to take care of some business interests on his behalf. Things have not been go-

ing well for him in the last few years, and I am to see what might be done from here to improve his fortunes."

"Ah, and have you been able to improve matters for him?" Burr asked politely.

"Oh, Colonel Burr, I'm completely inexperienced in business matters, and I have only been returned these few months. At the moment I am seeking advice and I have requested an accounting from Mr. Brunel, who keeps accounts on Mr. Jumel's property, and from the Desobrus in regard to the wineshop. Then I shall better be able to make a judgment on what must be done. It is extremely difficult, Colonel Burr, for a poor ordinary woman to master the business world. There are men on every turning who would take advantage of you."

"But madame, you are by no means poor and are certainly not ordinary; you shall yet be the victor, I am convinced of it," he said. His charm was never in better form.

"My dear colonel, you are outrageous, but I am grateful to you for cheering me this afternoon," she told him. "You have quite turned my spirits about. I was discouraged and lonely at the time we met. Now because of your extravagant flattery, I feel rather gay and giddy. I do thank you."

"If you truly appreciate my endeavors to cheer you, madame, then perhaps you would care to join me in my stroll that I may continue. It suits me to stroll along the Battery each afternoon; although, I must confess that at times I, too, suffer from loneliness and a feeling of alienation from the world. Such sentiments are fleeting and of no consequence, but they would be completely dissipated by your charming companionship. That is, if you do not consider that being glimpsed in public with my humble self would sully your reputation."

"Colonel Burr, my reputation is as my reputation has always been. There is little you can do to improve or to damage it, I daresay," she replied flippantly with a laugh, as she slipped her arm through his. Together they turned and began to amble slowly beside the quiet waters in the harbor.

"I had no idea that you still mourned for her, Colonel Burr," she murmured when they had paced the distance of the Battery Walk and turned to retrace their steps.

"I'm afraid I shall forever mourn her, Madame Jumel . . . forever mourn and forever hope. That is the secret of my loneliness—not the shunning of society, but the lack of my daughter's presence. I have lost all . . . all that makes life desirable and worth the struggling. Many years ago, my dear wife was snatched from me prematurely . . . then thirteen years ago—can it be such a number? In ways it seems no more than a month, and in many different ways it seems a lifetime—my adored grandson, followed in such short order by his mother—then my last link with those loved ones, my son-in-law Joseph, died a few short years after. He died of a broken heart, I do believe 'tis true.

"He wrote me that he was 'too much alone, too entirely unconnected with the world, to take much interest in anything.' Those were the words he used in one of his last letters to me. Poor man, he no longer had anything for which to live when they were taken from him. But I—I have not been so fortunate. I understand what he felt. I know what it is to be entirely unconnected with the world . . . and yet, I stubbornly live on. To what end? To what purpose, I wonder?" He paused and gazed into the distance above the water. The words were spoken not to Eliza Jumel but to the wind, to the distance, to the sky, or to whatever being there might be who allowed him to suffer such losses.

Eliza knew that she was glimpsing the bare tragedy of the man unbidden. She realized that he was temporarily unaware of her presence, and she waited patiently—an unusual accomplishment for her as she was not a patient woman—until his brief reverie was ended and his attention again returned to her. At length, his gaze settled on her face, uncomprehending, but as he recollected where he was and with whom, his eyes lost their piercing look and became tender and gentle. He smiled slightly, his expression softening.

"Forgive me, madame," he said, "for my lapse of manners and for being such dull company this afternoon. I should be most honored to have the opportunity to repair my lack of graciousness if you will grant me the occasion. I believe you did say that your husband remained in France. Would you be kind enough to spend an evening with me—perhaps the theater—and I shall pledge to be

most light of thoughts and frivolously attentive for your amusement."

"There is no need to atone for your melancholy, Colonel Burr. It is an affliction that strikes us all from time to time. And you have provided me with a good deal of diversion and lighthearted conversation this afternoon. But since you ask to make amends, perhaps you would do the kindness of dining with me soon. Oh, no—for a moment I forget myself that I am at present dispossessed from Mount Stephen."

"Indeed, madame, how can that be? I pray you've not had to dispose of such a magnificent home in order to set your financial affairs aright."

"No, no, I assure you. It was rented during our absence—a man named Moses Field. He prefers to remain for a time, and Mary and I have taken lodgings in Brooklyn." Then she reassured him, "It is merely temporary, have no fear."

"It relieves me to hear it," he told her. "And have you good legal counsel for your affairs?"

For a moment she did not reply. She wondered what his response might be were she to confide in him that her counsel for legal affairs was Alexander Hamilton, Jr., son of the man he had killed so many years before, whose death had killed his own political career.

"Yes," she replied at length. "Yes, I have a highly competent lawyer, and I have persuaded Chancellor James Kent to advise me in certain matters. They are most satisfactory."

"If you should wish my assistance or counsel at any time, madame, believe that I shall be most honored to serve you—as a friend only, since you have your own legal attorney."

"I shall remember your most generous offer, Colonel Burr, and this pleasant afternoon," she answered. As they approached State Street, she saw her carriage standing ready, waiting upon her. "Shall you wish to join me in my carriage, colonel? I will deliver you to your office safely, I promise you," she said as he helped her into the carriage.

"Thank you, no, dear madame. I feel a walk may clear my head—a walk away from the Battery, that is."

"I shall remember your kind offer to spend an evening

with me. I will send you word when," she said extending her hand to him.

"I will await it, Madame Jumel," he replied, as he bowed slightly and raised the hand to his lips. The carriage drove off and as it turned the corner, Aaron Burr kicked at the hog who was rooting in the dirt at his feet.

"Someday," he said to himself, "there will have to be a better way devised to dispose of garbage than to allow hogs to constantly run loose in the streets. I must put my mind to it."

Chapter V

"First thing in the morning," Elena said in reply to Claire's question. "I intend to see Dr. Friedrichson as soon as he's free. It seemed a good time, Monday morning, the beginning of the week and all that."

"I'm glad, Elena. I'm really glad you've decided to do that. I guess that means you both agree that Raymond shouldn't try to reach Damon," Claire said.

"I wouldn't dare do that without getting Dr. Friedrichson's permission first, Claire," he answered. "If anything should happen to me, and I should be held there for an indefinite period of time, as Dr. Aarons has been, my country would hold Dr. Friedrichson responsible. And what could he tell them?"

"If you ask for permission, do you suppose he would grant it?" Claire wondered.

"I don't know. I'm not even sure that I would be the right person to go back. We've never met, this Dr. Aarons and me. There might turn out to be no compatible rapport between us. I will try, of course, if Dr. Friedrichson asks me to do so, but I can offer no guarantee of success."

"I understand what you're saying, of course, Raymond, but to my thinking," Claire said, "you seem to be the only answer at the moment. Anyway, I'm glad you've decided to tell the institute what's really happened to Damon, Elena."

"Yes, I know," Elena said. "In a way, so am I. Somehow, though, I feel it's a sign of failure for me. I wanted

so badly to be able to accomplish his return without their help."

"It hasn't turned out the way we hoped, has it?" Claire asked. "Sam and I probably should have allowed you to go to the institute immediately . . . in the very beginning when Damon first disappeared. But it just seemed so wrong then. It seemed that if he had actually transferred back into time by himself there shouldn't be much difficulty in returning. But of course, we were all so worried about Angie being brought back then . . . and we had no way of knowing he encountered the spirit of Aaron Burr. It's incredible, isn't it, to think that so much has happened in the space of little more than a year?"

"A little more than a year for us, but it's been a much longer time in the century where Damon is, and we must not waste much more time in reaching him," Elena replied. "If I didn't feel that it had to be done quickly, I'd never agree to tell anyone else about this until I was convinced my own resources were exhausted."

"And yourself as well," added Raymond. "Since we were here the other night, Elena's made another attempt to go back to reach Dr. Aarons. Unfortunately, the result was the same, but this was more taxing for her. I think I've finally impressed on her that she may be harming herself needlessly, that it might be better to wait and see what Dr. Friedrichson has to say before she does anything else."

"Well, be sure to let me know as soon as you can get to a phone what he has to say. Sam and I are both going to be on edge until we hear from you," Claire insisted.

"As soon as the conference is over, I'll be in touch with you," Elena promised. "But I can't say how long it's going to take."

"I don't expect them to come to any decision on first hearing, anyway, Claire," Raymond told her.

"No, I don't suppose they will," Claire agreed. "But I'll feel better just knowing what the reaction is to what you tell them."

"I won't keep you waiting. I'll call as soon as I can," Elena repeated.

"When will Sam be home from his trip?" Raymond wondered. "I wasn't aware that he was leaving. You didn't mention it the other night."

"No, it was very sudden. A very short trip, thank heaven," Claire told them. "He'll be back sometime tonight ... time for dinner, I think. So I can tell him about your decision then. He'll be relieved, too, I know."

"If you're free this afternoon, why not come with us?" Elena suggested. "I've persuaded Raymond to do some sightseeing with me. I want to go through the Morris-Jumel Mansion. It took quite a bit of persuading, too. But we've made a pact that we won't even think about Damon—or Aaron Burr—and we're just going to go see it like we would any old historic place. Why don't you come along?"

"That sounds like a delightful thing to do on a Sunday afternoon, and it's such a beautiful day out that I'm really tempted," Claire answered, glancing longingly out the window. "But I have a lot of folios that I have to coordinate this afternoon. The detail work on them is getting me down. I promised myself that I wouldn't leave this room until I'd finished."

"O.K., then, we'll leave you to your chores while we go explore the mansion. But I think you're making a mistake. Bet our afternoon is more interesting than yours." Elena tossed the last remark over her shoulder as she and Raymond headed for the door. "I'll let you know what happens at the conference tomorrow, and I'm sure Dr. Friedrichson will want you to come in so he can talk to you—both you and Sam, I mean—so be prepared. It's hard to say what his reaction will be to the story. I think he'll be inclined to believe me, but I'm sure he's going to want all the corroboration he can get. It's not the sort of thing he runs into ordinarily, you realize."

"We're available anytime, Elena, you know that," Claire assured her. "We're terribly anxious for Damon to return, and we'll do anything we can." She opened the door for her friends, then with a slight frown on her face, she asked, "Why does the Morris-Jumel Mansion sound familiar? I'm sure I've never been there, but it seems I've heard of it before."

"Of course you have—Eliza Jumel was the second wife of Aaron Burr," Elena replied. "I suppose that's really why I'm so interested in seeing it." Before Raymond had a chance to speak, she held up her hand and continued,

"But I made a promise that I'm not going to try to get any impressions from the building, and I'm not, Raymond. I'm totally turned off to that kind of thing today. So don't worry. You and I are nothing but tourists today."

"See that you remember that all day long, my dear," Raymond answered with a smile.

"Well, certainly," Claire said. "That's where I've run into it before. I recall reading something about the house when I was trying to find out what happened in Theodosia's life. Burr married Madame Jumel there in the house, didn't he?"

"Yes, in the front parlor, I think it was," Elena agreed.

"Oh, darn. Now I would like to go more than ever." Claire cursed her fate.

"Come ahead," invited Raymond. "Just throw over everything and take the afternoon off and come with us."

Claire hesitated a minute, clearly tempted. "No, I really have to get it done," she replied reluctantly, then added, "Don't you think it would be a perfect place to make some kind of contact with Damon, though, Elena?" Claire's eyes widened at the thought. "That wouldn't be the real reason you're going there, is it, Raymond?" she asked. "You wouldn't do that without telling me, would you?"

"Oh no, Claire." Raymond assured her. "Don't worry. It's nothing so dramatic as that. I'm really interested in the house only because it's old and historic and much life has been lived there. It's one of the remaining antiques in your country, and to think of it remaining intact in the midst of the bustling city is amazing to me. I'm surprised that someone didn't tear it down to build apartments or something on that property a long time ago."

"It doesn't seem a likely place to contact Damon, anyway, Claire," Elena added. "They were never happy for very long there. They were married very late in life, and they spent a lot of time quarreling, so that would make it kind of the wrong place to reach for him. The house was hers and she loved it, but she's not the one we have to reach."

"Even if we did reach him, it would be so late in his life that there would be a great danger in not being able to return him before Burr died." Raymond explained. "My

hope is to reach your friend long before he ever encounters Eliza Jumel."

"Well, as intriguing as I find the house and the afternoon, and your company, I am going to turn down your offer to go along and ask you to please be on your way. I must get these things done before Sam gets home," she told them with a smile. "But the next time you go, if you give me a little more notice, I'd love to see the place with you."

Claire watched them as they walked toward their rented car and waved to them as they drove off. What they were about to do for the afternoon held much more interest for her than the chores she had to face as she closed the door behind them.

As they drove uptown toward the Jumel Mansion, Elena began to feel an unreasonable excitement rising within her. She was burning with an eagerness to see the house. She knew there was nothing to warrant such a feeling of stimulation, and she had promised Raymond that she would not try to arouse any feeling of presence about the place; still she couldn't help the anticipation. For a brief moment she allowed herself a reverie in which she was suddenly overwhelmed with a brilliant inspiration and was able to reveal Damon's exact whereabouts in time to Dr. Friedrichson. Then in the next moment, as she considered it, she knew what an unlikely possibility that was.

Still the feeling of anticipation remained . . . lingering enticingly. She wondered if she should confide her excitement to Raymond. But he would only repeat how foolish she was and tell her not to place any hopes on what could—but probably wouldn't—happen at the house. And he would be right. She knew that herself. It was, after all, merely a brief interlude in the long and eventful life of Aaron Burr. It was only a house that he had shared with someone for a very short, turbulent, and unhappy period of his life. She knew that if she were to deliberately seek him out, the Jumel Mansion was hardly a likely place to do it. Much better, would be somewhere that he had remained for a long stretch of time, like his home or his law office. But that was out of the question, naturally, since those buildings had been torn down and replaced long ago with the new, taller buildings necessary to house the of-

fices, businesses, and enterprises of the city as it outgrew its original physical limitations and expanded into the giant it now was.

They had no difficulty reaching the mansion, but finding a parking space was quite another matter. After several trips around the immediate area with no luck, they began to weave their way up one street and down the next until they finally came upon a car just pulling away from its space at the curb. They waited until the traffic passed, and Raymond backed the car into the coveted spot. Elena barely waited until the car was parked and Raymond turned off the engine before she was out and standing on the sidewalk. Raymond gave her a sympathetic smile as he joined her. Together they started walking in the direction of the mansion.

"What a pity it's surrounded by so much population. All these houses crowded in upon it, take away from the grandeur it should have," Raymond remarked as they walked along 160th Street toward Jumel Terrace.

"It wasn't always this way, you know, Raymond," Elena said. "When Eliza Jumel lived here with her first husband, you could see from one river to the other. Why, from the balcony, there," she pointed to a small second floor balcony under the front portico, "it is said, they could see seven counties." She told him. "When the Jumels bought the land, they had thirty-six acres, along with the house and stables and orchards and gardens. Later they added almost forty more acres. So, it was quite a sizable estate for them." She looked about her at the small crowded modern dwellings and middle-class apartment houses. "Believe it or not, it was also far out in the country, then, as well. It was a considerable journey into New York City from here."

Raymond followed her gaze at the rows of houses lining the streets around the mansion. "Well, you couldn't say it was out in the country anymore, my dear."

"No, you certainly couldn't. But, at least, the house has been preserved. A great deal of credit for that has to go to Eliza Jumel, too. It was rather run down when they bought it. She showed extremely good taste in refurbishing the house, restoring the whole place with a wonderful feel for its original Colonial character. That's quite a remark-

able thing for a woman of her incredibly squalid beginnings."

"What does that mean?" Raymond asked.

"She was the daughter of a prostitute, and when she was old enough, she became one herself," Elena explained.

"How do you happen to know so much about her?"

"I was interested in everything that touched the life of Aaron Burr, so I read about her life. She was a remarkable woman."

"Yes, she must have been—most remarkable," Raymond agreed thoughtfully.

They stopped as they reached Jumel Terrace and Elena looked across the street toward the house. There it stood—enormous, white, old—a proud reminder of a long time ago. It was Georgian in design, impressive and tall. It dominated and dwarfed the rather large piece of property which stretched out from it.

"Oh . . . isn't it magnificent, Raymond!" Elena murmured.

"Yes, very impressive," he agreed. "But I hadn't expected it would look so much like a mansion of your American southern states."

"It's the front, I suppose," she explained, motioning with her hand toward the four stately large columns, two stories high, which supported the roof of the front portico. Beneath the roof, there was the small balcony she had pointed out before. "It really must have been some terrific country estate in its day," she said.

She never took her eyes off the house as they crossed the city street. Dr. Saundre walked beside her, keeping in step with her pace, carefully noting her face rather than the mansion. As they stood at the gate, she gently ran her fingers over the iron, thinking, waiting, for what he did not know. A car drove along Jumel Terrace beside them, turned the corner and was gone. Still, she kept her hand on the gate.

"Shall we go in, Elena?" Raymond asked. When several seconds passed and she failed to answer, he said, "Would you rather walk around the grounds first? Or shall we take a look inside the house? Where do you wish to start?"

She turned to him very slowly and let her hand fall from the iron gate to rest on his arm. "I'm sorry, Ray-

mond. Forgive me. I was doing what I promised not to. I was lost in wishful thinking. I wanted so much to find some clue, to experience something from the past . . . even a feeling, a thought. I'm afraid I didn't hear what you said."

"Nothing came to you?" he asked.

"Nothing at all," she told him. "Please don't chide me. I was just hoping. Anyway, you were right."

"Would you like to go home? Do you still want to see the house?" he inquired.

"Oh yes; I must see it . . . I want to," she said.

"Good—I would have been very disappointed if you said no," he answered. "I find I'm fascinated by it myself. I suppose it's as close as anything your country has to compare with the antiquities of Egypt."

As they climbed the few steps to the front porch of the house, Elena's eye was struck by the massive size of the front door.

"Isn't it beautiful," she murmured, running her hand over the wood.

"Stop that, Elena," Raymond chided as he drew open the door, allowing her to enter. They stood a few minutes in the front hall, a room of extraordinary size and sweep. Elena's gaze moved slowly along the walls, noting the paintings hung there. She studied the detail of the molding at the ceiling. Next she examined the antique furnishings, the wide-plank, dark-stained floors, all impressive and beautiful. But none of it brought her any unusual response. Uneasily, she glanced at Raymond, who was also busily absorbing the magnificent details of the house.

Raymond, with his hand lightly on her elbow, guided her to the room on the right of the hall. Obviously, the dining room. There in the middle of the floor stood a large, dark banquet table, polished until it was gleaming and resplendent. At the near end of the room was a large sideboard, which held a gleaming silver service.

"Dinners here must have been very elegant affairs, dinner parties, I mean," said Raymond.

"There were never many dinner parties in this house, Raymond. Does that surprise you?"

"Yes, it does."

"The Revolution began shortly after the house was built

and the sympathy of the owners, Roger Morris and his wife, remained with England. The house was used as a headquarters for both British and Americans—at different times, of course. Then the house was taken over by the new government at the end of the war and after a while it became an inn, a coach stop, or way station, whatever you want to call it, and it wasn't well kept. Eliza and Jumel renovated the house but there was very little entertaining while they occupied it. She was shunned by the respectable matrons of society because of her unsavory beginnings. The pious women of New York society never forgot and never forgave her for her past.

"They never accepted her into their social world, and all her life, that's what she craved—to be a lady of society. For a while she tried. She sent out invitations, but the women always sent them back with some excuse. Eventually, Stephen took her with him to France, and there it was different. She was beautiful, charming, witty, and above all, her husband was wealthy. There she became the darling of Napoleonic society. After all, in France it was quite acceptable for a man to keep a mistress, and for a woman to be one. It's a pity they didn't spend all their lives in France, she and Stephen. She would have had everything she wanted there. But his business was here, and he couldn't control everything from France. Poor Eliza! Her only crime was that she was born desperately poor and illegitimate, and she overcame it in the only way open to her in those days. I think she must have been a remarkable woman."

"What did her husband do to make him so rich?" Raymond asked.

"He was a wine merchant. He imported wine from France—and from other countries, too, but his family was in Bordeaux."

Crossing the spacious hall, they stood at the door and looked into the room opposite the dining room, which was most probably used as a sitting room. It was nicely furnished with pieces of the period, and on the wall hung a strip of wallpaper decorated with morning glories. A small plaque on the doorframe stated that Eliza Jumel and Aaron Burr were married in the room in 1833.

"Why do you suppose that strip of wallpaper is there," Elena asked.

"I would guess it's a copy of the original and they plan to redecorate the room in that same paper again," replied Raymond.

"Why, of course. Do you have any vibrations from the room, Raymond?" Elena asked the question uncertainly.

Raymond shook his head slowly. She suspected he was trying to find some impression from the room and found it disappointing that he hadn't. Neither had she.

"I'm afraid there's nothing for us here, Elena, but interesting history," he replied.

"Yes, I agree," she answered. "I was hoping that I would feel some of the familiarity that Percy experienced in Charleston . . . something that would indicate that we were on the right track. But now I don't think so at all . . . not for either of us."

"Can we make a pact that we'll stop trying so hard." Dr. Saundre suggested. "We are, you know. Why can't we both acknowledge that there's no presence of Dr. Aarons here. Then we may relax and enjoy the afternoon."

"It's a deal. I promise," Elena smiled sheepishly at him.

They viewed the octagonal room at the end of the house, and both directed their thoughts away from Damon Aarons. It was a peculiarly shaped room and handsome in its individuality.

On the second floor, they were surprised to find the upstairs hall so spacious. From the doorway they examined the bedroom of Madame Jumel, with its life-sized mannequin admiring herself in a mirror. Across the hall from it was the much smaller bedroom which had been occupied by Burr. And in the corner was the bedroom which had been Eliza's adopted daughter's. There were other rooms on the second floor, one had been a children's playroom. As Raymond began to climb the stairs to the third floor, Elena hesitated at the foot of the steps. He turned to wait for her, but she shook her head.

"I don't want to go up there, Raymond," she said quietly.

"But why? You haven't seen all the house, yet." Raymond insisted.

Suddenly, she was reluctant to inspect the house which

had so intrigued her. She, too, wondered why she had lost interest.

"Yes, I know, but I've seen enough," Elena said. "I don't want to see the third floor, that's all, Raymond."

"Very well." Hesitantly, Raymond shrugged and started down the steps toward her. She motioned him back.

"No, no. You go ahead. I didn't mean that you couldn't. I don't mind."

"I do not wish it if you would not like to," Raymond assured her.

"I would like you to. I . . . I have a slight headache, and I'm tired, I think. It's nothing, really. I just don't feel like climbing the steps to see those rooms. But I would like for you to see them. I'll wait here for you."

Raymond paused, standing on the first step of the stairs. "If you are ill, Elena, would you prefer to go home?"

"No, I'll be all right. It probably came on because I was so hopeful there would be some feeling about the place and there isn't and I'm disappointed, that's all," she told him. "Please go ahead, Raymond. I would feel badly if you didn't."

"I would like to if you're sure you don't mind. I will try to be very quick," he told her.

"Don't hurry," she replied and made the effort to smile. As he smiled in return, she realized she was being foolish and relaxed a little. Raymond has such a warm smile always, she thought. I feel better just seeing it . . . more at peace, more at ease. What a strange effect for a smile to have.

To pass the time of waiting, Elena looked again into the largest of the bedrooms, the one which held the mannequin of Madame Jumel. She tried to concentrate on the woman it represented, almost willing the model to move or speak, but it didn't. It merely stood in its accustomed position, admiring itself in the mirror before it. When she realized what she had been thinking, Elena turned away and smiled at her own foolishness. Behind her, she heard a noise and turned to find three young women climbing the stairs to the second floor. She moved from the principal bedroom toward the balcony of the second floor. But the balcony was closed off. She tried the handle of the door, but it was locked. She stood for a moment or two looking

at the grounds below, then she went to the bedroom which had been Burr's. All her thoughts were concentrated on the bed. She tried to visualize Damon resting there, not sleeping but awake, resting. She gazed with such intensity that her eyes began to burn and water. As she fumbled for a handkerchief in her purse, she turned her head aside. No, she thought, there's no key to Damon to be found anywhere in this house. The excitement I felt was just my own doing. I was deluding myself. It was hard to turn her back on the small bedroom, but she forced herself to wait patiently at the foot of the stairs leading upward.

As Raymond descended the stairs, the smile was gone and a frown had taken its place.

When he reached her side, he said, "There is death in this house, Eliza."

For a moment she stood looking at him. "What did you say?" she asked.

"I can sense death in this house," he repeated.

"No, not that, I heard that, but did you call me Eliza?" she questioned.

"No, why should I do that?" he answered. "Did I?" he asked uncertainly.

"Yes," she replied. Giving a shiver, she said, "That's strange. I'm chilly." She began to rub her arms briskly. "When you called me Eliza I suddenly felt very cold."

"I'm so sorry, Elena. I don't know why I did that. I'm afraid my thoughts were somewhere else. Would you like to leave now?"

"Not yet," she answered, continuing to rub but with less vigor. "What was on the third floor that was so upsetting?"

"Nothing extraordinary. Bare floors, two simple bedrooms sparsely furnished—only basic furnishings. Nothing at all unusual."

"Then why did you say you could feel death?" she questioned.

"Because I could," he replied. "There's an eminent feeling of death about that floor . . . very strong."

"Whose death, Raymond?" She sought an answer eagerly.

"I don't know." He shook his head. "I want to go now."

"Let me see if I sense it, too," she exclaimed with great

excitement. She turned and was halfway up the stairs before Raymond could stop her.

Holding her arm, he pleaded, "No, don't, Elena. Don't go up there. I'm sure it's nothing. Let's go back downstairs."

She pulled her arm abruptly from his grasp. Then she turned to face him with cold, hard determination in her eyes. Her cheeks were flushed with eagerness.

"I'm going up," she said. "I'm going to see what I can find there." Then her voice became more persuasive as she coaxed, "Come with me, come, Raymond."

Raymond shook his head and replied, "I wish you wouldn't."

Her voice was cold once more as she answered, "Whether you come or not, I'm going to the top floor."

Raymond paused a moment but knew that he had lost the battle. He could not let her go alone. If she sensed the same awareness of death that he had, it might be frightening to her. Warily, he followed her up the steps.

Standing at the top of the stairs, she looked about her and then cautiously began to walk toward the door of the nearest bedroom. She stood there, her fingertips resting on the doorframe. She rubbed it gently, unconsciously. Raymond watched her, saying nothing, his apprehension growing.

After a bit she moved from the door to the middle of the small hall and stood waiting, quiet, submissive, expectant. Raymond was now overwhelmed with a feeling of alarm, but as he watched her, he became aware that there was no such alarm for Elena. She appeared to be quite oblivious to the stifling sensations that pressed upon him. *Why is it so?* he wondered. *Can I be mistaken? Is it possible that I'm suffering a self-induced hysteria?* Afraid he might arouse a similar apprehension in her which was not there at present, he forced himself to remain quiet. *What is it? What?* he continued to question his mind. Still he waited for her. Elena was in no hurry. She stood in the middle of the hall examining everything about her, absorbing each small detail with genuine interest, a slight quizzical smile unfolding. The smile, for some reason sent a chill through him, and he could stand it no longer.

"Elena, we've seen enough. It's time to go." Raymond

reached for her hand but pulled back before taking it. He feared that his touch might transmit to her some of the fear he was fighting. He could not explain even to himself what it was he feared. Certainly not the house. There was nothing that the house could do to harm him—or Elena. But the fear refused to be vanquished by reason. Like a cancer it remained and slowly but steadily spread through his being.

"I'm not ready to leave yet, Raymond," she replied patiently.

"The atmosphere is so stifling, Elena. It's hard for me to breathe," he pleaded with his hand to his throat.

"Oh, poor Raymond," she responded. "I am sorry, truly I am. In just a minute we'll go."

"I need some air—outside. Can we go outside, please, Elena?"

"Oh, yes, of course we will. Let's take a walk around the house," she suggested.

"Come. I think that's a good idea. I must get out of this house," he replied.

Slowly they descended the stairs to the second floor. Elena paused as they passed the main bedroom, the one which had been Eliza's own. Again her attention was caught by the life-sized mannequin standing in front of the mirror. Raymond stood behind her, looking into the room at the massive four-poster bed and the small chest which held an elaborate array of toilet articles. Then he followed Elena's gaze to the image in the mirror. He was drawn to the face reflected there, and as he fixed his attention on it, the face began to soften in line until all the hardness of the mannequin dissolved and the reflection seemed to breathe with the warmth of a living woman. He watched in fascinated horror as the eyes turned from the vision of herself in the mirror to look directly at Raymond's own reflected image beside hers. She smiled to him a warm and fetching, irresistibly feminine smile. The face continued its changing. The softness remained and the transition was slight, almost imperceptible, yet somehow it had become the face of Elena Blakely. She continued to smile at him.

A chilly foreboding ran through him which he could not quell and again he was overcome by the sensation of death which hung in the air like heavy perfume. With a supreme

force of will, he closed his eyes to the sight and stood that way for many minutes, fighting down a panic which insisted on rising within him. He rested his head in his hand and tried to wipe away the cobwebs of a blurred and unresponsive mind. The vision lingered, refusing to be dispelled. At length, he raised both his hands and covered his eyes. When he looked again into the mirror, he saw that there were three faces—his own, that of Elena, who stood in front of him, and the mannequin. The mirror only reflected what was true—it was his mind which had distorted the image—but why? Why? Why? Was he becoming ill? Again he closed his eyes and felt a weight crushing against him. He swayed a little, brushing against Elena.

The unexpected pressure of his body against hers made her turn and look at him. For the first time she realized that something was very wrong with her companion. Instinctively, she reached out to him, placing an arm around his back and a hand beneath his other arm.

"Raymond, what is it?" she asked. "Are you ill?"

"I don't know. We must leave, Elena. We must leave now." His plea was emphatic.

"You look as though you're about to faint. Maybe you should sit down for a minute."

"No," he answered. "I'm all right. I'm having trouble catching my breath."

"Then you must sit down, just for a minute."

"Not in the house, Elena. I must go outside."

"Then let's go, if you think that will help," she said and started with him to the stairs. "Maybe some water would help. Would you like a glass of water?"

"No. No, I don't want anything. I only want to leave this house." His voice grew louder, more insistent. His hand grasped the railing of the staircase and he started to make his way down the steps to the main floor below.

Puzzled by his strange behavior and the even stranger look on his face, Elena followed him out of the house and onto the front lawn.

"Are you feeling better?" she asked, holding his arms as she looked into his face.

"Yes, I'm better now," he said, straightening himself up in order to fill his lungs with air. He touched her hand on his arm but could feel nothing.

What was wrong with him? Why couldn't he feel her hand? He pressed it tightly but still felt nothing.

"Ouch," she cried, wincing with pain. "Raymond, you're hurting me."

"I'm sorry, Elena," he murmured as he raised her hand to his lips, but he could not feel the hand he kissed. He must be ill or—or—could he be losing himself?—Was he about to go back into time against his will? He couldn't.—He MUST NOT let that happen.—Or was it all in his mind, like the reflection in the mirror upstairs?

He studied Elena's face but found only concern there, for him, for his odd behavior. There was no sign of alarm.

"There is a feeling about this place, Elena," he told her. "It's like a great mantle covering the house. It came to me when I stood on the top floor and then followed me all through the house. Is it possible that you feel none of this?"

"No, Raymond. I felt nothing," she confessed.

"But the top floor, did you sense the presence of death I spoke of?" he asked.

"There was nothing like that. I was only interested in the house itself. I tried to feel what you felt, but nothing came to me. I think it's in your mind, Raymond," she replied.

"Do you think I would lie?" he asked solemnly.

"Certainly not," she replied lightly. "I don't think you're lying, Raymond. I think it came from somewhere inside you rather than externally, that's all."

"Had it been my own choosing, I never would have selected a feeling of death. It was in the house, I tell you. . . . But how you could not be aware of it?"

"No, I was not aware of it. I had only a warm and pleasant feeling from the beauty of the house. I like it very much. I think it must have been an unusually beautiful estate in its day. So apparently my feeling about the house was exactly opposite from yours. I felt *drawn* to it rather than *repelled*." Her remarks were insistent.

"How can I be so mistaken?—I can't believe I deceived myself, Elena."

"Perhaps you're worn out, Raymond. You've worked very hard since you've been here. Your mind is weary and needs a rest, I think. I should never have involved you in

what has happened to Dr. Aarons. I think by transferring my worry to you, I've worn you down even more," she said sympathetically.

"It may be," he admitted. "I may be tired."

"Do you mind if we stay and walk about the grounds a bit?" she asked.

"There doesn't seem to be much to see," he answered, glancing about.

"Oh, please, I would love to look—and we are out of the house—and it won't be long," she begged. She began to stroll, then she stopped. "Does something out here bother you, too, Raymond?"

"No, there's nothing bothering me here," he replied, laughing lightly at her seriousness. "If you would like to stroll about, then we will."

"Good," she replied. "I wasn't sure you were up to it."

"Yes, I'm up to a small stroll," he answered.

They began to walk along the side of the house to the small garden at the rear. As they passed the large white structure, Elena looked up at it.

"I wonder how many servants it would need to keep up this place," she said.

"Many," replied Raymond.

"I'm sure it would," she agreed.

"You would have to be wealthy to own a place like this," he added.

"Oh, yes, very very wealthy," she agreed.

"You see, there's really nothing to see back there," Raymond said to her. "So, shall we go? Perhaps we could see a movie before we have dinner. That would be a welcome change for me."

Elena shook her head. "I don't want to go yet, Raymond. Just a little longer. Let's stay just a little."

"If you like this," he said with a sweep of his head, "why don't we go to Central Park where there is so much of nature, grass, trees, flowers—where it's large and spacious and open. I have an idea—why not have a picnic there? I've thought that would be pleasant since I first rode through the park. If we can find someplace nearby to get food, we could spend a leisurely time lounging over our impromptu picnic."

Smiling, Elena shook her head. "I don't think so, Ray-

mond. Perhaps later if you still wish to, but it's not that I crave the outdoors, it's just that I'm not ready to leave here. I just sort of love it—it's so—so compelling," she said as she motioned toward the house and grounds with her hands.

"For myself, I would call it repelling," Raymond replied. "It's a handsome building, yes, but there is something not right about it," he added.

"Not for me. I would be happy to stay here forever and never—never leave," Elena insisted. Then she turned from him and walked farther along the path.

"Well, if you refuse to picnic in Central Park, how about a drive into the country. I would love to see some of the country near here. I have been confined to your city for so long. We could find some country place to eat. It would be so much more refreshing than this poor pathetic garden, Elena. Please, let's do it." Raymond's suggestion was an entreaty.

"It does sound lovely, Raymond," Elena responded.

"Splendid! We will drive until you find some spot which appeals to you." He reached for her hand only to have her draw away from him. "What is it, Elena?" he asked, startled.

"No, Raymond, I can't go. I can't leave this beautiful house," she said slowly, staring at him in amazement to think that he would even consider leaving so soon.

"But you can't just stay here, Elena," he replied.

"Yes, yes, I can, Raymond," she said, and began to walk farther away from him, holding out her hands on either side as though she were touching flowers—what would it be, he wondered? Could she imagine there were roses growing there? Was she playing a game with him?

"Elena!" He called sharply to her.

She turned and smiled sweetly at him. "Yes?" she asked innocently.

"Please come. I want to leave, and I want to leave now." The oppression which had come over him first on the third floor of the big white house began to creep through his veins again like a wave of frigid air. "There is something here in this place that I do not like—I do not trust. We must go."

She turned her back to him. "You're being foolish, Ray-

mond," she said. The next minute, she regretted that she had been so harsh with him. She knew he was disturbed, still—still—"One more minute," she called, again touching the invisible flowers on either side of her.

"No, Elena, no more. No more games. It will take an hour or more before we find a place in the country to stop, and I am tired now. I want to rest for the remainder of the afternoon," he said.

"I know," she brightened. "If you want a picnic, why not have it here?" she suggested. "Wouldn't that be delightful? Then we wouldn't have to drive, and it would be so convenient."

"That's absurd. You insist on ignoring the fact that this house is what I want to get away from. I'm uncomfortable here. We should never have come. I should never have let you bring me here." His voice was stern and brittle with irritation. His feeling of unease had been replaced by a rising anger. He held out his hand for her to take. "Come with me now, Elena. I can't stand being here. That feeling of smothering has followed me even in the open air. There is no joke about this, Elena. I'm frightened by this house."

Elena stood her ground. She didn't even raise her hand to his. She looked him directly in the eye with her head held high and erect. Again, she didn't believe him. She didn't think he was lying—exaggerating, she would say.

"I won't go with you, Raymond," she answered. "I *can't* go with you. You may leave, but I never will. Good-bye, Raymond." She spoke with great firmness, standing absolutely still with a slight smile on her lips. "I never shall."

"Oh, Elena, don't be absurd. That's ridiculous romantic nonsense." Raymond was scolding, his voice as sharp and keen as a newly-honed knife. "I demand you come with me . . . immediately. There's something here that makes it hard for me to breathe . . . hard for me to see. . . . You must come with me."

In contrast to his, her voice was soft and low, a bit more throaty and warm than it had been a few minutes before. "Yes, you must go, Raymond. You must go—but I must stay—I must always stay."

Her words seemed to float toward him, soft and distinct and unhurried as though they were carried on the afternoon breeze. Raymond stood transfixed as he realized that

the smile on her face as she spoke to him was the smile and the face he had seen in the mirror of the second floor bedroom.

"Good-bye, Raymond, good-bye," she said lightly as she turned and began to walk back toward the house.

Then it came to him. Of course, of course, the danger was not to him but to Elena. Why hadn't he understood? Why hadn't he realized? For a second, only for a second, Raymond stood quite still, unable to believe what he had seen. Then filled with a sense of terror, he called her name; but she gave no indication that she heard him and continued on her way toward the front entrance of the house. It took another second, but no more than one before he recovered his senses and started in pursuit of her.

"Elena! Stop! Stop!" he called. A middle-aged couple, who had just come through the front gate looked at each other in surprise. He failed to notice them. As he rounded the corner to the front of the house, he stopped abruptly. There was no sign of Elena. Only moments before she had been but a few steps ahead of him, had turned that same corner. He expected to find her standing on the porch, but she wasn't there. She wasn't anywhere that he could see. The large front door was closed. There was no way she could have entered the house and closed the door behind her before he came into view. He ran to the other side of the house, hoping to find her there, but still, there was no sign of her. She had somehow disappeared. But that was impossible—wasn't it? How could she just disappear? She must have gone into the house—she must have! It was the only explanation. Slowly, he climbed the front stairs behind the middle-aged couple and entered the great house after them. Inside, he glanced tentatively about him, stepping first to one room and then the other, peering into the spaces in the vain hope that she might be there. Finding not the slightest trace of her, he approached an elderly lady standing in the hall near the stairs. As he began to walk to her, she smiled pleasantly at him and asked, "May I help you, sir?"

"Uh, yes, I think so," he stammered. I was in the house a short time ago—uh—with a lady friend of mine. We were strolling through the grounds just after, and I don't

seem to be able to find her now. I—uh—I wondered if she had come in here again."

"I don't believe so," the lady responded politely. "Until you and those people came in, no one had entered the house in perhaps ten or twelve, fifteen minutes—something like that. Did you look around the outside? Maybe she's there."

"Yes, yes I did. I couldn't find her there, but it's possible I missed her somehow. I thought she might have come back for one last look at the inside."

"You could look on the second floor if you like, but I think it's doubtful she's there. As I said, it's been several minutes since anyone entered the house. Do you think she might have gone back to your car to wait for you?" As an afterthought she asked, "Did you come by car?"

"Yes," he replied. "It's parked a few blocks from here."

"That's probably where she is then."

"You're most likely right—but while I'm here, I think I will have a look about the second floor," he said.

"Certainly," she replied as he began to climb the stairs.

Elena was not on the second floor. Somehow, he was positive that he would not find her there; he merely held that hope in order not to give in to his own suspicions. It would be so much easier for him than to have to face what he was now forced to admit. In some manner unperceived by him, Elena had disappeared, literally disappeared, before his very eyes, and he had been powerless to prevent it. What he was to do with that knowledge, he could not fathom. How he could explain it to anyone else, he could not imagine. And most importantly, he would have to come up with some satisfactory explanation to offer to Dr. Friedrichson in less than twenty-four hours.

How could it happen? Why had it happened? With his thoughts in a turmoil and his mind spinning from the events of the past hour, he decided that he must get free of this house if he was to think clearly. Passing the main bedroom on his way to the stairs, he hesitated. He didn't want to look into the room again, but he felt compelled to. Slowly approaching the doorway, his eyes traveled over the room and came to rest on the reflected image of the mannequin in the mirror. Once there, he could not draw his gaze away from the face. Once more, the features

warmed and changed until he was certain that it was Elena who smiled at him, but his mind kept insisting that the figure was merely a plastic dummy dressed in a gown suitable to the period of Madame Jumel, nothing more.

Still the face in the mirror which smiled at him was unmistakably Elena. He was sick with horror at his failure to realize that the image before was a warning he had ignored. He might have been more fearful for Elena had she not been so comfortable in the house, so taken with it. And now he knew why. This was her home. She belonged here in this great house. Somehow, she had mysteriously been transferred into Madame Eliza Bowen Jumel, the owner, the mistress of this great mansion in its prime. The very thing he had warned her against had happened in spite of all precautions that they could take. He hurried down the steps, anxious to clear his troubled thoughts. Reaching the front door, he groped for the handle and swung it open with all his might. He hurried on through the gates and did not slow his pace until he was within sight of the car.

He leaned his head against the back of the seat and breathed a heavy sigh. He forced his mind to remain free of thoughts, clear and untroubled for a full minute, then he began to introduce thoughts deliberately one by one, hoping in that way to be able to make some sense out of what he had just experienced. And more, trying to decide what he could do—if anything—about it. At length, he decided there was nothing he could do by himself. He needed help from someone, but who could he turn to for the kind of help he needed? Who could accept this information without being suspicious that he needed psychiatric, not psychic, help. Should he go directly to the institute for assistance?

Didn't he owe it to Elena to wait at least a few days, perhaps even a week—she had said two weeks when they spoke of it before—to allow her the time needed to return with Dr. Aarons. She had been so obsessed with that idea for such a long time, it seemed cruel to deny her this chance to see if she could succeed. Still, it would be easier to explain to the institute now rather than wait until much time had elapsed. Around and around the thoughts went

in an endless circle. It was not going to be a decision he could make alone.

He turned the key in the ignition, and the engine began its steady, friendly hum, a comforting sound to Raymond, a real sound. It told him that he, at least, was in the familiar world of the present. As he pulled into the stream of traffic on the busy city street, the solution came to him. He had to tell Claire White. She and Sam were the only people he knew who could help him decide what to do. And they deserved to know what had happened. They would be surprised to learn of it, but they wouldn't question whether it had happened as he said. They had already been through so much—so many extraordinary happenings, all of it revolving around their friend Damon Aarons and his disappearance. This seemed like another in that long chain of occurrences. Hopefully, if they were lucky, it would be the final one. Claire and Sam would help him decide whether to leave alone the two people in the nineteenth century in the hope that they would find their way back by themselves.

He needed the help of Claire and Sam—and he needed a drink.

Chapter VI

Elena was surprised to find the room so gloomy. It seemed to be pitch black outside the small window, not a light to be seen, and not a single star visible in the night sky. Nor could she see even a glimmer of moonlight. It took several minutes for her eyes to adjust to the dimness in the room. There was only the light shed by one candle, a round white taper which stood in its simple holder on the stand at the head of the bed. The light was steady and even but not at all the brightness of the electric lights to which she was accustomed. She wondered why someone had failed to turn on the lights in the room; but gazing about her, she could not find the switch on the wall, and there were no lamps anywhere that she could see. The absence of them struck her as a very peculiar thing, a ridiculous way to save money. She looked more carefully and realized that the room was not really familiar to her. Vaguely, it seemed as though she had been there before, but she couldn't remember when.

By the time she finished scrutinizing her surroundings, her eyes had become reconciled to the scant light, and she was able to make out a figure lying on the bed before her. Frowning as she squinted at it, Elena studied the face. It was that of an aging man with completely white hair. His face was very thin with small lines running in every direction. He seemed to be sleeping quite soundly; although there wasn't the slightest sound of breathing. Both arms were free of the light blanket which covered him. One

hand, the left one, grasped the edge of the blanket covering him, but the right arm hung limply from the bed. Elena stared intently at that arm. There was a large dark streak running from the vicinity of the elbow down to almost the wrist. Then she noticed an equally dark spot on the floor just beneath. It appeared to be a liquid. As she watched, the stillness of its surface was broken by a drop which fell from the man's arm. Instantly, she knew what it was—BLOOD.

Blood was running from the old man's arm, and he had obviously lost a lot of it, she realized with horror. She gave a slight cry and both hands flew to her mouth to stifle the scream which threatened to follow. She felt something soft pressed against her mouth and was aware for the first time that she must be holding something in her left hand. What could it be? A handkerchief? She held it away from her to examine what it might be and found that she held a large, soft cloth in her hand, a cloth spotted with dark stains. But what was she doing with it? How did she come to be holding a stained cloth? Intuitively, she knew the stains were blood—the old man's blood—and she knew the cloth had been used to bind his open wound. The realization caused her stomach to churn, and she dropped the bandage as though it were a snake about to strike. In her hands it seemed like a vile, repulsive thing. Why was she holding it? How did she come by it?

She searched her mind to remember what had happened, how she had come here, what she was doing in this room with this strange man—this strange, injured man. But she could find no explanation for any of it. She couldn't even remember who the man was or how he had been injured. Should she bind up his wound . . . should she call a doctor? Were there other people in the house who could help her? What hour it was, she could not tell, but it mattered little if it meant that they must be wakened to save this poor man. Yes, first she must bind up his wound again so that he did not bleed to death. Reluctantly, she bent to the floor and reached out a well-groomed hand to the bandage. The thought of touching it again was so distasteful to her that she had difficulty forcing herself to grasp it, but she closed her eyes and set her jaw and with

determination, obliged herself to pick up the bloodied cloth. Holding it at arms length, she slowly approached the bed and hesitantly reached toward the wounded arm. She touched it lightly and found that it was cold beneath her fingers.

Such a foreboding filled her that her breath was almost stifled. There was a heavy, oppressive feeling of death about the room, she thought. Then, suddenly, into her mind came the words that Raymond had uttered that afternoon. "A sense of death" was what he had said, and he, too, had difficulty breathing. That was exactly what she was experiencing now—a sense of death so intense that she could hardly breathe. She urged her mind back to the victim on the bed in front of her and stared at his face. Its stillness had the suspicion of death in it.

Perhaps it was too late to bind his wound, she thought. Still clutching the bandage, she walked gradually around the foot of the bed and along the opposite side until she could reach his left wrist. Taking it in her hand, she noted that it, too, was cold to her touch. She felt frantically for a pulse, first one place, then another, up and down the thin wrist. She could detect no sign of life blood being pumped through his veins. As the realization that death had already claimed the man came to her, she dropped the wrist. Now she felt cold herself—cold and clammy and slightly sick to her stomach. She wondered if she were going to faint. But she dare not, she told herself—not here in a room with this dead body. She could do nothing for the poor man. She must leave.

She raised her head as she heard a light scratching at the door. She listened carefully to make certain that it was not her imagination. An animal—could it be a dog, perhaps? She listened again, but there was nothing. No sound came at all. There was not even the sound of crickets in the night coming through the tightly closed windows. She stood unmoving, just listening for a few more seconds, but still, there was nothing. She shook her head, decided that her mind was playing tricks on her ears, or vice versa. Slowly, with a heavy, tired step, she began to walk toward the door.

As she drew near, she heard the sound of rushing footsteps on the opposite side. Again she stood quite still and

listened. But they were gone. She heard nothing. Unaware, she dropped the bandage she had been carrying, and it fell noiselessly, uselessly, to the floor. She again began to pace the distance between her and the door to the hall. With a shaking hand, she turned the knob, but the door refused to budge. She tried again, but it would not yield. There was a pounding in her throat. Why didn't it open? Why? What could be wrong? Was she locked in? Could it be that she would be forced to spend the night with this corpse? Oh, heaven, she thought. Please, not that! Not that!

One hand flew to her head. *How did I get here? What can it mean?* There was no reason why she should be in this room. The old man lying dead on the bed—the night—none of it made any sense to her. The sound—the sound she heard outside the bedroom door. Could that have been someone locking her into the room? And the footsteps after—someone running away? Of course! But why? Why? What was the reason behind such an act?

She determined to pull herself together and do what she could. No matter, she told herself. The why of it was not important at the moment. She must find a way to get out of the room. There must be something she could do. Looking desperately around her, she saw the candle with its steady small yellow glow on the table beside the man now dead. He no longer needed it. Fetching the candle, she held it close by the door. Again she grasped the knob firmly and twisted it with all her might. But the knob refused to budge; the door remained closed. There was no doubt that it was locked.

She knelt in front of the door and peered through the keyhole. There was a faint light on the other side. That would mean whoever locked her in had taken the key with him. What a horrible thing to do, she thought, wondering if she had been left to die along with the old man on the bed. Kneeling was uncomfortable for her. There was something pressing into her right knee, so she shifted her weight. With her free hand, she reached down to rub her knee. As she did so, her hand brushed against something. She found a hard, cold object on the floor, rather sizable it was, too. She brought it close to the candlelight to examine it. A key! It was a large key. Turning it over in her hand to study it, she realized that it was a house key—

brass—and appeared to have been shaped by hand. The door—of course. It was the key to the door, but what was it doing on this side of the door if the door had been locked from the outside? Then another, unhappier thought came to her. Perhaps it was not the key to this door but to some other. She must try it first before she could be certain.

Elena struggled to stand up, but she found herself being held down. Some awkward thing was making it impossible for her to rise. She looked down at the floor to see what it could be, and for the first time, she realized that she was wearing a taffeta gown with an enormously full skirt. She was kneeling on the skirt. It was a gown of a vibrant shade of purple made from a most luxurious fabric. *How in the world?* her thoughts ran. *How? What am I doing in this dress?* As she lifted the skirt, she was able to stand. She stared in amazement at the dress—a gown from another century but she was wearing it. Where did I get this costume, she wondered, but immediately, the answer came to her. *What a silly pumpkin I am. The dress is mine, of course. It's one that I had fashioned specially in France. I adore the color. It does such flattering marvels for my complexion—my hair.*

She straightened her skirt and inserted the key in the door and gave it a turn in the lock. Rotating the handle, the door swung open easily at her tug. Elena stepped into the hall and heaved a great sigh of relief. Holding the candle in one hand and the skirt of her dress in the other, she began to descend the narrow stairs to the floor below slowly and carefully. She looked in each room, but found no one. Again, she reached for her skirt and began to descend the broad stairway to the main floor. She slackened her pace as she drew near the bottom of the stairs.

Now, recognition was beginning to settle upon her mind. There was no mistaking that she was in the Jumel Mansion. It was the same—but somehow, it was different. And she was apparently all alone. There was no one else about that she could find—except for the corpse on the top floor. After searching through the rooms on the ground floor, she again ascended the stairs without thinking of where she was going or what she was to do. She went directly into the bedroom which belonged to Eliza.

Elena was confused and exhausted. She could not recall ever being so tired in all her life. She longed for a good night's sleep. Surely, when she awoke in the morning, this would all be revealed as a nightmare, a horrible thing conjured from her imaginative, subconscious mind.

But her hands felt uncomfortably sticky and gummy. She must wash before she could sleep. She went directly to the pitcher of water, knowing without thinking, where it was. She poured a quantity into the basin and dipped her hands into the fresh water. As she rubbed them, she saw that the water was turning a red color. She drew her hands from the basin quickly. They were clean and spotless. Then why was the water red? But, of course, the stickiness was gone from her hands. What she thought was dirt and perspiration had been blood—the blood from the bandage and the floor of the old man's bedroom. She looked at her ceiling, half expecting to see the blood dripping through from the floor above her. But the ceiling was clean and spotless. She dried her hands on the towel beside the basin and turned toward the bed. But that would not do. She couldn't just leave the bloody water in the basin all night. She picked up the basin and poured the stained water into the slop jar, then she placed the cover on the jar and the towel on top of that as though that would hide forever from the world the contents of the jar. She would throw it out herself in the morning.

She would also decide what to do about this whole episode in the morning if by some chance she did not wake to find it all had vanished with the first streaks of daylight to cross the morning sky. Slowly she commenced to unbutton the bodice of her gown and placed it carefully across the back of a chair. She could never remember being so thoroughly tired. For a moment she contemplated whether or not she should undo her hair, as was her nightly custom, but it hardly seemed worth the while. Still wearing her petticoat she fell onto her bed and immediately slipped into a deep and untroubled slumber.

The sunlight was streaming into the room when she opened her eyes the next morning. She would, undoubtedly, have been able to sleep on well into the middle of the day, had she not been wakened by the quietly insistent calling of her maid. As Eliza looked up, she saw Marie

standing at the foot of her bed. She lifted one arm and motioned the girl to leave.

"Go away," she insisted, "I do not wish to waken yet. I am too tired. I require more sleep. I will call you when I am ready to be served my breakfast. Go away."

The young girl bit her lip. She did not wish to disobey, but she knew she must arouse the sleeping lady. For a few minutes she remained at the foot of the bed, hoping that her presence would cause her mistress to awaken. It did not, and she was required to step softly to the head of the bed and call her name again.

"Madame—Madame Jumel. You must waken. I have been sent to waken you."

"Don't be foolish. Go away. I wish to sleep." Eliza's response was cross.

"But madame, there are gentlemen waiting downstairs to see you. I told them you were not yet stirring, and they bade me wake you immediately. They insist upon talking with you." The girl spoke cautiously. She did not wish to anger her mistress, but the gentlemen had impressed upon her the importance of speaking with Madame Jumel at once.

"Indeed!" said Madame Jumel, suddenly sitting upright in her fourposter bed. Her eyes flew wide open, flashing anger. "*Indeed!*" she repeated with emphasis. "And who are these gentlemen who insist upon disturbing my slumber? By what right do they *order* you to waken me against my wishes?" Her voice filled with stubborn fury.

"One gentleman represents that he is the high constable of New York, and the other man is his assistant—so they have told me," the girl stated simply, her voice barely loud enough to be heard. She was frightened by the appearance of the men and their impressive titles, and she was equally apprehensive of her lady's temper, which could be formidable when aroused.

"The constable of New York? Why, that's stupid. What would he have with me? How could you make such a stupid mistake? They do not wish to speak to me but to Mr. Jumel. Go tell them directly that he is ill and cannot be disturbed." She then allowed her head to fall back onto the plump down pillow and closed her eyes. "Now go away and do not disturb me again until I send for you."

The girl did not budge. She stood quietly shifting her weight from one foot to the other, wringing her hands.

When she made no movement toward the door, Eliza sat up again, very irritated now by the continued interruption to her sleep. "Well, what are you waiting for?" she asked, her voice loud with anger, her dark eyes flashing. "I told you to go order them from the house. When Mr. Jumel has recovered, he will drive into the city to see them. Tell them that. Whatever they want, it can wait until that time."

"No, madame, I fear it cannot," the girl replied shyly.

"What insolence is this? If you do not learn to hold your tongue, girl, I shall rid myself of you. And pray tell me, why can it not wait?" Her tone was demanding.

"It's about Mr. Jumel that they've come to talk to you, they say," she replied.

"Well, what about him?"

"They want to question you about his death, Madame Jumel," the maid said and then asked: "Shall I help you dress?"

"His death? I believe they are a bit premature. He has been injured, but he is not yet dead. Why did you not tell them that?"

"But they say he is dead, madame," Marie insisted, despite her mistress's haughtiness.

If Stephen were dead, why had she not been informed immediately. How could the constables know that he was dead and she not know? Preposterous. She searched the floor beside her bed for her slippers and was provoked to find them not where they should have been.

"Fetch me my slippers and my negligee," she ordered. As she placed her bare feet on the polished floor, she noticed that she was not wearing her night dress but had on a petticoat of India cotton, the one she had worn the day before. That in itself was quite odd. Then as she glanced into the mirror, she noticed that her hair had not been unbound to hang loose, as was her nightly custom. It was most peculiar. She did not remember going to bed the night before, only that she had been very tired from caring for Stephen. Eliza began to suspect that something might be very wrong.

"Go tell the gentlemen that I will be down directly," she instructed the maid. "I will dress later."

The girl placed a pair of rose-colored slippers on the floor in front of Eliza and held up a negligee of the same soft shade for her to slip about herself.

"Shall I arrange your hair, madame?" The girl suggested.

"No, I can manage myself for the moment. Go and tell them. And send for William to come down from Mr. Jumel's room. I'm sure they will want to question him about Mr. Jumel's illness, to discover that he still lives." She could not bring herself to wonder if he could actually be dead. Surely, it was not true. She would make it a point to see him as soon as she had dispatched these bothersome constables—whoever they were and whatever they wanted.

"William is with them in the parlor downstairs, madame," the girl replied as she exited the room and quickly disappeared down the stairs.

William is with them? What impertinence to send for him without her express permission. Eliza was more perplexed than ever. She must give William a severe reprimand for daring to leave his master unattended, when Stephen was so ill. She had never liked William, nor had William been partial to her, but Stephen insisted on keeping the man, and she had been willing to humor Stephen; although, he was beginning to be more and more burdensome in his old age.

He was growing quarrelsome and cantankerous. And this latest suggestion of his—this plan to write a will which would leave a substantial portion of his property to his impoverished relatives in France was insupportable. It was totally preposterous, really. She would never agree to it. Besides, the property was no longer in Stephen's name. When she returned from France, from the last trip when she brought Mary Eliza back with her, she found it necessary to secure from Stephen a paper giving her the power of attorney in order to turn some of his property into cash for his immediate needs. She had done the best she could for him, but on the advice of her lawyer, Alexander Hamilton, Jr., and with the help of Chancellor Kent, one of the city's leading jurists and presiding member of the state court of chancery, she had made many profitable

land transactions in order to earn for him even more money. In the process she learned a great deal, under the tutelage of these two men about making wise investments.

She had succeeded in rebuilding the Jumel fortune, and while she was about it, she transferred all the property owned by either her or Stephen to their adopted daughter, Mary Eliza. It was all perfectly legal, and if Stephen had sent for these constables in order to transfer it from Mary Eliza to his French relatives, they would encounter a formidable foe in Eliza. She had worked too hard to save his fading fortune to turn it all over to some foreign people that she had barely met and didn't like.

As she brushed her hair into place and fastened it behind her ears with a ribbon, she was more and more convinced that the gentlemen were here to serve her with some legal document which Stephen had instigated, and she determined that immediately after she finished her breakfast, she would call for the coach and ride into New York to confer with her attorney. He was an extremely astute young man and would most certainly know how to deal with this bit of nonsense and chicanery.

Fully composed, she swept down the broad stairway and into the small front sitting room. The two gentlemen were waiting for her, one pacing the floor, the other fidgeting on the edge of his chair. William was nowhere to be seen. It saved her the trouble of dismissing him. As she entered the room, the seated man rose, his hat held in his hands. She stood before them, waiting for them to speak first or to present her with the legal document. Neither of them made a move toward her. They stood, looking embarrassed, each waiting for the other to begin speaking. Tired of waiting, she sat regally in a chair before the fireplace.

"Well, gentlemen, what is it that is such urgent business this morning," she asked, her eyes throwing them a challenge to begin the first round of the legal battle.

"Uh, I'm sorry that we disturbed you, Madame Jumel, but it is indeed urgent business. We've come about the death of your husband—uh, Stephen Jumel," said the chief constable.

"Then you have inconvenienced yourself for naught, gentlemen, to come all this distance from the city, because my husband, Stephen, still lives. However, he is too in-

jured to receive visitors." She spoke in a voice dripping with sarcasm.

"We have reason to believe otherwise, madame," said the chief.

Eliza moved to the edge of her seat, her eyes flashing fire, her body taut as a bow string. "My husband was injured yesterday in a fall from a haywagon as he was working in the field with the hands," she said. "He was injured, I tell you, not killed. He suffered a wound to the head, and he is under the care of our doctor, who came to visit him as quickly as he was notified. Stephen was bled and bandaged and is now resting in his bed under the watchful eye of his servant William and myself. I have done my utmost to provide for his every comfort and for his speedy recovery. The doctor assures me that he has an excellent chance of mending as rapidly as a man of his age might expect. I resent the insinuation that he would be allowed to die because of lack of proper care. When he has deceased, I shall inform the authorities and provide a suitable burial for him but not until."

She stood. The anger which had been aroused in her caused Eliza to suffer a slight, though uncomfortable, headache. She felt not herself this morning and could not readily identify the cause. She was irritable and out of sorts. Her head throbbed faintly, and she was quite exhausted. It seemed as though she had not slept at all during the night, but she knew this was not true. When Stephen was recovered sufficiently, and life had quieted again about the house, she must persuade him to take her on a prolonged holiday. Perhaps they would spend a leisurely summer at Saratoga, where they should be able to regain some of the friendliness which had been slipping away from their relationship in recent months. She would most certainly enjoy the rest and inactivity, and it would be beneficial for Stephen, too. She knew it would.

But now, she wished only to be rid of these intruders. They were an added irritant to her already frayed nerves. She walked determinedly to the door of the sitting room. "Good day, gentlemen," she said, with a nod of her head. "My butler will show you to the door."

In an unexpectedly quick movement, both men sprang toward her. "I'm afraid you don't understand, madame.

We have come to charge you with the murder of your husband, Stephen Jumel."

"You have been accused of his murder, Madame Jumel," said the assistant constable, who had been silent until this statement. He held up a sheet of paper in his hand. "We have a warrant to arrest you on that charge."

Eliza swayed a bit and braced her hand against the door of the room. "I am actually charged with the murder of my husband?" she asked. The thought was beyond comprehension. "But—but—he's still alive—I told you that," she stammered.

"No, madame. I believe he is dead," insisted the chief constable.

"Let me see that paper," she demanded. As the assistant constable placed it in her hands, she asked, "And who accuses me of this dreadful thing?"

"The man who has accused you is William, who says he is—or was—Stephen Jumel's servant."

"Yes, William is his servant," she replied.

She scanned the paper. There it was without question. William accused her of willfully and deliberately causing the death of Stephen Jumel. But, surely, they could not believe that.

"Come . . . follow me," she said. "I will prove to you that Stephen is only injured, that he is still alive."

She led the men to the third floor bedroom where Stephen had been taken, and where she and William had tended him. The door was open, and she indicated that the two men should enter. She herself stood in the doorway until they were in the room. As she looked at Stephen, lying white and still in the bed, his arm above the pool of blood on the floor, and the bandage somewhere near the foot of his bed, she realized that they were, at least, partly right. Stephen was dead. The man with whom she had shared nearly thirty years of married life lay dead before her.

Suddenly, she knew that she had seen him lying there before. It seemed that she had dreamed standing in this very same room, knowing that he was dead, knowing that the life blood had drained from him, and yet, then she had not realized that it was Stephen, that it was her husband. In rapid succession, as though on a revolving carrousel

spinning about in her head, she saw everything that had happened the night before, her surprise at finding herself in this room, her shock at finding the occupant of the bed had expired, her panic at finding the door locked, then finding the key, letting herself out, searching for someone else in the great house, washing the blood from her hands, and throwing the stained water into the slop jar, and finally falling into an exhausted slumber too weak and tired to change into her night clothes . . . the slop jar . . . the bloody water. Dear Heaven, if someone should find that, it would seem to be proof—proof which would be impossible to refute—that she had hurried Stephen's death, if not actually been responsible for it.

The jar . . . the jar, she must empty the jar before someone found what was in it, she thought, and she turned in wild-eyed desperation to the stairs. But the discovery of the morning, the horrible accusation of murder, the revelation that Stephen was no more, and her own indisposition, were too much for a mind, already struggling to find a compatible manner in which Eliza and Elena could co-exist, and she could not see beyond the blackness which swept over her. Eliza Jumel tumbled helplessly down the stairs to the second floor landing where she lay in a crumpled heap.

The two constables, still in Stephen's third floor bedroom, heard the noise of her fall. The chief quickly rushed to the head of the stairs.

"She's fainted! John, come quick." He beckoned his assistant urgently. "The madame has fairly fainted dead away."

He knelt beside her and began to shake her hand. "Madame—madame—madame," he entreated, but to no avail. She did not respond. "John, run down to the kitchen and tell them that Madame Jumel has fainted. Ask what they can do to help bring her around. I'll carry her to the bedroom there and see that she's comfortable on the bed. Now, hurry!"

John hurried down the stairs to the main floor and found the butler in the dining room. When he had delivered his message, he rushed back to the bedroom on the second floor where Madame Jumel was resting on her bed.

The butler hurried to the basement kitchen to find the cook and Marie.

"On the table that has all her toilet, she keeps that small bottle that has aromatic spirits," the cook said. "Just wave it under her nose a bit—not too close, mind you now, cause that would make her choke—just kind of like this." With the stirring spoon the cook held in her hand, she waved lightly under Marie's nose, allowing it to come no closer than six or eight inches. "Now, just like that you do it. And you place a wet cloth on her forehead. When her eyes are open, you might try to give her a sip of brandy. That'll bring her around in a hurry. If she don't come right round, run down and fetch me, you hear?" The girl nodded, and the older woman turned back to her cooking chores.

Carefully, Marie waved the small bottle of aromatic spirits under Eliza's nose—three, four, five times. She put the stopper on the bottle, and holding it in her hand, she waited. Eliza did not move, she gave no sign of responding to the foul odor. Again Marie removed the stopper and waved the bottle back and forth under Eliza's nostrils. This time, Eliza twisted her head to avoid the smell, and she raised her hand off the bed as if to push it away. Gratified, Marie replaced the bottle on the table and poured a small amount of water from the pitcher into the basin. She dipped in a clean cloth which lay beside the bowl and expertly wrung it nearly dry. With this she proceeded to wipe madame's face. Eliza's eyelids fluttered, and she moved restlessly on the bed, moaning as she did so. Standing about the bed, watching and waiting, were the two constables and Marie.

As Eliza began to bring her thoughts back to the moment at hand, she forced her eyes to open and with difficulty, she kept them wide. She was a bit surprised that she should be lying in her own bed and surrounded by the two men and her maid, all with expressions of concern etched on their faces. She straightened herself to a sitting position, resting her back against the head of the bed. Marie approached her and took the large pillows from behind Eliza, fluffing them and then positioning them again behind her for support.

"Would you like me to bring you a small glass of brandy, madame?" Marie asked.

"No . . . no . . . I think no brandy, Marie. But a cool cloth would aid my head, please. I feel quite flushed." Turning her attention to the two constables, she addressed them politely. "I must apologize for fainting, gentlemen. It was the shock of finding my husband dead . . . and under such tragic circumstances. I can't imagine how the bandage might have come loose. When I left him last night, he was in satisfactory condition, and the bandage seemed to me to be quite secure. So tragic . . . so tragic."

"We certainly understand your shock, madame. And we must apologize for our intrusion this morning, but your husband's servant . . ."

"NO . . . NO, Marie . . . *don't* empty the basin," she screamed as she noticed that Marie was about to pour the water from the basin into the slop jar in order that she might refill it with fresher, cooler water. But Eliza screamed, and immediately realized that she must take care not to arouse suspicion regarding the contents of the slop jar. Hastily, she added, "I . . . I . . . it was necessary during the night to make use of the slop jar, and it has not yet been cleaned. I would prefer not to have it uncovered in front of these gentlemen . . . Uh . . . someone may do it later . . . after they leave."

"No, no, you must not mind us, Madame Jumel. After all, we will not be offended . . . and if it will improve your health and disposition to have your face bathed with a freshly cooled rag, then we insist that you be properly ministered to." The chief constable made the very gallant suggestion.

"If you prefer, madame, I will call the butler for you and have him empty the slop jar immediately," added the assistant.

"Indeed, madame, pray do," agreed the chief.

"NO!" Eliza swung her feet to the floor. "No, I insist that I am much improved . . . and where were we in our discussion, gentlemen? Pray, let us complete this unpleasant business."

"But, madame, do not be too hasty," argued the chief. "You may again swoon if you attempt too quickly to be on your feet. Most surely, you should rest a while. Allow

me to send for the butler so that your maid may fill the basin with fresh water and refresh yourself before we proceed further."

"No, I quite forbid it," said Eliza in alarm. "And I forbid anyone to suggest such a thing again. I am well enough recovered. The water is of no further concern. Now, I wish to be finished with this business. What was it? Oh yes, you have accused me of the death of my poor husband."

"We have not accused you, madame," the chief said. "His servant has accused you. We are merely here to inform you of that fact and to take you into custody."

"To take me . . . to take me into custody? What do you mean by that phrase? I would have you inform me more specifically. I am innocent, you know." When they made no reply to her, she repeated, "I am innocent, do you realize that fact?"

The chief replied, "I sympathize with you, madame, but you have yet to establish that for a truth. The servant, William, states that he saw you murder your. . ."

"MURDER . . . you said . . . MURDER . . . ?" Eliza gasped and clutched at the bodice of her negligee.

"Uh, the servant, William, states that he saw you causing the death of your husband, Stephen Jumel, and making no effort to assist him in his struggle to live," stated the chief constable.

"Impossible—that is impossible. He could not have said so." Eliza stammered, her eyes wide with fright and disbelief.

"But that is *his* statement, madame." The assistant constable tried to be as gentle as he could. Having witnessed the lady swoon at the sight of her deceased husband, he was persuaded that she could never have stood by while the man lay dying and not rush to give him aid and comfort.

"And . . . just how does William say that I . . . hastened my husband's death," Eliza inquired. The chief constable had a detailed reply to this:

"He stated that late last night, as he was sitting with your husband, Stephen Jumel, the injured man fell into a slumber. William had not eaten any food since early in the day, and he was overcome with hunger. He felt that it was

safe to leave the sleeping man to make his way to the kitchen in order to appease his appetite. As he was in the kitchen at his dinner, he heard footsteps on the stairs above him. He believed everyone else in the house to be asleep, and he climbed the stairs to see what had caused the noise. He did not want to chance it that his master had awakened in a delirium and might wander unknowingly about the house, doing himself further injury.

"Finding no one on either the first or second floors, he made his way to the third floor, where he found the door to Mr. Jumel's bedroom shut and locked. Peering through the keyhole, he saw yourself standing near the victim's bed, the bandage in your hand, and a pool of blood beside the bed. The victim was motionless, and William was certain that he was dead. William has stated that when he left the patient, the bandage was fastened securely to his arm, but when he peered through the keyhole, you were standing with the bandage in your hand. He states that it must have been removed from the patient's arm by yourself."

The chief constable recited the accusation to the best of his memory, and the assistant constable nodded in agreement at the end of each sentence.

When he had finished, Eliza stood for a moment. Her mind raced at an extraordinary pace. It fit—yes, it all fit very nicely together, dovetailing to perfection. The noise she had heard outside the door must have been William . . . and . . . was she holding the bandage at that moment? She could not remember. But if William so accused her, most probably she had it in her hand. But she did not kill Stephen. That did not *prove* that she had killed her husband. She found the bandage on the floor. She did. She knew that positively she had picked it up from the floor—but that was the second time she held it. The first time—she picked it up then also, didn't she? Didn't she? She struggled to recall, for what other explanation could there be?

She could never kill Stephen, and murder was what it would amount to if she had, indeed, removed the bandage. No! No! She did not do what she was accused of doing, but how could she prove it? Her mind churned, full of thoughts, trying to find the one clue that would prove her innocence—but then, it occurred to her—William could

not *prove* that she was guilty. It would be his testimony against her own.

"No, no, he is mistaken. He is merely accusing me for spite. I was angry with him at one time—very angry, and I struck him. He has been resentful of me ever since. But one has a right to strike a surly servant. I begged Stephen to sell him, but for some reason he would not. Now, the man sees an opportunity to ruin me, and to see me humiliated, he would falsely accuse me. Surely, you can not believe what he has told you. He lies. Can you not see that he lies?" She spoke, wildly, hastily, rambling.

"It is hard to believe that it is a lie, madame, or that it might be for spite," the chief said. "No man would willingly walk so many miles from your country home to the City Hall in the Battery during the dark of night with neither stars nor moon to guide his path through all that great distance in order to vent his spite. No man would, were he in command of his senses, consider such an act, and particularly not a servant who needs answer to his master, unless he knew that the accusation he was duty-bound to make, was true.

"If it were spite, madame, why would he not merely run away to his freedom? But the sincerity that showed on the man's face, worn and weary from his many hours of honest trudging, and the sadness in his voice and expression as he told us of the death of his master, have made us wonder at the truth of his accusation. If you will dress, now, madame, we will escort you to City Hall, where you will be formally charged."

"But I . . . I, too, am brokenhearted at the loss of my dear husband, and under such pathetic circumstances. Surely, you will not require me to leave my home at such a time of bereavement." Eliza's plea was weighted by emotion.

"It is my duty, madame," answered the chief.

"But it is my duty to prepare my poor departed husband for a proper burial. Would you deny me that right?" she begged.

"No, madame, of course, that is your right."

"And would you deny me the privilege of mourning him—him who showed me such kindness and respect when the entire city would spurn me. He gave me his love,

his fortune, his name, and shared with me his life. Have I not the right to weep a little in private for this departed cavalier with whom I shared so much and to whom I owed even more?"

The constable was growing uneasy and began to fidget restlessly.

Eliza pressed her advantage. "I protest that I am innocent—and bereaved of the one person to whom I would turn for advice in this matter. What should I do, how should I think of my own defense when my mind is filled to brimming with the sadness of my heart?" As tears sprang to her eyes, she dabbed at them with her linen handkerchief. She did not weep openly, but her voice grew choked and strained.

The two officers glanced uncomfortably at each other. They could not decide what was the proper course of action, but one way or another, they must do their duty, if only they could be certain of where their duty lay.

"Can it matter so very much to the city of New York if I am taken into custody today or if it be next week, or even next month. Surely, you do not think that I will flee from your grasp. I fear that I am too well known to slip away under cover of disguise, and in any event, you would most surely pursue me, making flight futile. But I protest to you that I would never attempt to flee because of my firm belief in the justice of our society and our system of law. I *am* innocent. I only beg you gentlemen to allow me time—time to bury my beloved husband—and time to mourn him." She paused and fought back a lump in her throat as she dabbed again at her damp eyes. "And you can not deny me time to secure a proper counsel who will prepare a defense in my behalf. Then I shall most eagerly answer this dreadful accusation. Surely, you will grant me that much time," she reasoned.

The two men looked at each other. What she was asking was simple and reasonable. They nodded to each other and the chief spoke.

"I think it seems a moderate request, madame. As you say, you are a woman of some prominence, and you are not likely to attempt to escape. And, as you say, if you are innocent of this foul crime, there would be no reason to flee. When you have secured an attorney, you may instruct

him to come round to see me. We shall set a satisfactory date to hold a hearing on this question."

Eliza breathed comfortably for the first time since the men had confronted her with the accusation. She was innocent, of that she was certain, but to prove it would take some thought, some planning. And in spite of what differences they may have had, and what irritations they might have presented to one another, she was sorry that Stephen was truly gone. She would miss him. They had been together so long.

As they reached the door, the chief constable bowed awkwardly to Eliza. "I am sorry for your bereavement, Madame Jumel. Please excuse our disturbing you at such a time."

"You understand it is our duty, madame," added his assistant.

"I quite understand, gentlemen. Good day, and my thanks to you for allowing me the privacy that is due a widow. At present, my thoughts are muddled and covered over with the thoughts of my husband. I could not prepare a suitable defense, merely protest my innocence as I have done. My attorney will come to see you when he feels it is proper to answer these charges." She did not smile as she let them out the door. Her heart was too heavy and her mind too confused to consider a smile.

She stood with her back to the door for a few minutes, thinking. What must she do first? How she would love to return to the comfort and security of her bed to waken another time suitably refreshed to find that it was nothing more than a horrible dream, a dreadful nightmare. But sleep would change nothing. It was real, it was true. It had happened. Stephen was dead and she was accused of his murder. And everything that William had recounted was true. She remembered very dimly as though she had witnessed the happenings and not been part of it. She remembered seeing herself with the bandage in her hand, and she remembered the coldness of Stephen when she touched him, but she had picked the bandage from the floor—surely that was it. She would never have removed it from his wound. Never—never—NEVER—NEVER! The word pounded again and again in her head, keeping in time with the throbbing of the pain there, until she

could bear it no longer. She uttered a cry, piercing and filled with despair. Her hand flew to her head and she closed her eyes against the tragedy she must find the strength to face. Marie came running to her down the long expanse of the hall.

"Madame—madame—what is it?" she called.

Eliza opened her eyes at the sound of her name. "Oh, Marie—Marie—he is gone. He is gone. Send for the doctor at once." And sobbing, she added. "I must know what he has to say about the bandage coming loose."

"Come upstairs, madame. Come." Marie was leading Eliza to the steps and up to her bedroom.

"I must dress, Marie. I can not rest. There is too much that must be done," Eliza protested as they entered the room. Then she froze at the sight before her. William had come to empty the slop jar. William—of all people! How could he know? Her accuser!

"What are you doing in my room?" she asked in a voice hard and frosty as a February day. "Get out. Get out, I say!" She screamed the command at him.

"But, madame, William always empties the waste from all the bedrooms at this hour," protested Marie.

"No, no . . . not anymore . . . not anymore . . . not if I have to do it myself. I want him out of my sight, out of my house." She turned to William and spat the words at him, "How could you do such a horrible thing to me?"

"I saw you—I saw you," he replied simply.

"You lying villain!" Eliza shrieked at him. Thrusting her arm toward the door, she continued to scream, her face growing red with rage. "Get out of my house. Get out, I tell you."

William picked up the slop jar and began to move toward the door.

"Put it down. NOW!" She screamed. "I mean you are not to serve in the house again. Go . . . go someplace . . . go to the stables and do not let me set eyes on you again or I shall have you flogged."

William set down the jar where he stood and walked slowly from the room and out of the house. As he was bidden, he went to the stables, intending to stay well out of Eliza's way until it came time for him to appear at her trial for murder.

It was several hours before Eliza could compose herself adequately to think of what should be done. The doctor had arrived and examined Stephen. He pronounced that Stephen was officially dead and wrote out a certificate to state that fact. He advised Eliza of the name of a man who would take the body and see that it was prepared for burial. He offered to send the man around to the house if she desired. Eliza thanked him most kindly for his assistance, but it did not help to solve the mystery of why the bandage had come loose from the wound. The doctor swore to her that in all his many years of practice, no bandage had ever come undone before, nor did he think it likely that Stephen had revived with enough strength to claw loose the wrapping. He could offer no clarification, and Eliza did not think it proper to tell him of William's accusation.

When the doctor finally departed, she returned to her room. She must dispose of the contents of the jar before it was inadvertently discovered by someone else. It would only add seeming verification to the accusation. But where could she dispose of it without being detected. It would be most unseemly and cause many questions to be raised if she were to carry the heavy jar outdoors herself. Yet, it was the only answer. She looked about the room. Perhaps there would be smaller containers somewhere and she could take it out a bit at a time . . . but she quickly discarded that idea. Speed was necessary. Whatever must be done, should be done immediately. She dare not leave the room until she had disposed of it.

With firm decision, she walked to the window which overlooked the side yard. She threw it open and peered about in all directions. No one was to be seen either near or far. She immediately lifted the jar and heaved its contents with all her might as far as she could throw the tainted water, then she hurried to replace the jar in its proper position because she was certain that someone was softly approaching. She looked up to see Marie at the door, a worried expression on her face.

"May I do anything for you, madame?" Marie asked. "Would it soothe you to have me brush your hair?" Noticing the open window, Marie began to walk toward it when Eliza stopped her.

"No, no. Leave the window as it is. I . . . I have need of the air. There is a sense of death about the house . . . a sense of death about the . . ." Why did she choose those words, she wondered. She seemed to remember having heard them before, not so very long ago. But who would have said such a thing to her? A friend? Yes, it seemed a friend, but who and why? How could anyone have felt a sense of death? "I need air . . . a sense of death about the house . . . a sense of . . ." Then she knew what it meant. Elena remembered it all . . . Raymond . . . the house . . . his foreboding . . . the night before. In a flash she remembered it all . . . and in that same flash she realized that she was now in the nineteenth century living the life of Eliza Jumel. All of this came to her just before she swooned.

Chapter VII

"That's amazing, Raymond, it's just amazing," said Sam as he scratched his head in wonder. "She actually did it. I was sure she wasn't going to be able to. In fact, I thought she had given up on it."

Sam had returned home in the afternoon, arriving much earlier than Claire had expected. At first, Claire had been upset with having her work interrupted again, but now she was glad he was back. It was comforting to have him sitting beside her, to be able to touch him and know that he was safe. Raymond, also, was glad to have him there. He had been badly shaken up by his experience with Elena, and Sam's level head would be valuable in trying to figure out what, if anything, should be done.

"Just this afternoon, when you were here, she said you'd made an agreement not to even try to get any sensations from the mansion, Raymond," Claire added. "So I find it even harder to believe than Sam does. It's terribly exciting, but a little frightening, too."

Raymond nodded his head slowly and resumed the pacing, restless and agitated, that had kept him occupied while he was relating the incidents of the afternoon. "I suppose in a way it's exciting, Claire, but I'm more frightened by it than anything else. Before we went, we both agreed that we weren't going to let any ESP feelings interfere with our afternoon, but Elena seemed to be unable to control her urge to try for something. Frankly, I have to admit I was pleased when she failed in the begin-

ning. Then she seemed to give up on it, as though she realized there was nothing for her there. But I picked it up . . . against my will, I have to admit, but I did pick up strong vibrations."

He ceased his aimless wandering and stared at a spot on the rug in front of him. "I should have known," he told himself. "I should have been able to decipher the hints along the way. I should have been able to see what was happening. How could I be so stupid? How could I?" He turned to look at Claire and Sam, seated comfortably together on the sofa. He didn't expect them to give him an answer . . . he hadn't been able to come up with one himself, and he had asked himself that very same question since he left the Jumel Mansion. Before either of them had a chance to say anything, he continued both pacing and talking. "I was just so overwhelmed by that horribly oppressive feeling of death that the house repelled me. At the same time she was being drawn to it, I was being repelled. I couldn't get out of it quickly enough. I thought it was coming as a warning to me—that something was about to happen to *me*. It never occurred to me that it could have anything to do with Elena."

"You can't blame yourself, Raymond," Sam told him. "Naturally, it would seem that something like that was meant as a warning to you. Just hearing you tell us about it, it seems that way to me. Anyone would have jumped to the same conclusion."

Claire curled her slender legs beneath her on the sofa and spread the folds of her blue and cream caftan about them. Then she tilted her head and asked, "Do you think there's any way you could have prevented what happened?"

"I could have made her leave sooner. I should have gotten her away from that building." Then he shook his head. "I don't know. Maybe I could, but then maybe . . . at least, I should have realized that something was wrong when she stood on the top floor. She was too much at home there, too comfortable there. I should have suspected then. Feeling as I did about it, I never should have allowed her to go to the third floor at all."

"I don't know, Raymond," Sam said slowly, considering his words carefully as he spoke. "I don't think there's any

way you could have prevented what happened. I suspect that the wheels were set in motion for this before you even met Elena . . . maybe even back when all this began."

Claire sat upright, drawing away from his embrace to study his face. "You don't mean this was predestined, do you?" she said, "I can't agree with that."

"No, I wouldn't say it was predestination—I'm not convinced of that by a long shot," he replied as he drew her back to rest against his shoulder. "I think that maybe a cycle was set in motion . . . a cycle of lives that were intertwined in the past was reactivated and now they are mingling with a cycle of lives that are intertwined in the present."

"Well, Elena's life has certainly been interwoven through this whole strange interlude. She was bound to be included, I suppose. She was so closely associated with Damon and his work at the institute. She insisted on being told what really happened to him. And she really has done everything she could to try to help him come back. And, of course, without her efforts, Percy would never have recovered." Claire then added rather wistfully, after a moment's thought, "I guess it was a natural progression for Elena to be the next one involved. So, maybe you're right, after all, darling."

"Natural progression or not, I still don't feel right about it," argued Raymond. "In all my experiences with paranormal occurrences, I never have known of something as incredible as this happening. And I was actually there to see it. It wasn't Elena's doing, I'm convinced of that. She didn't will herself there. It was almost as though she were accepted by the past . . . by that house . . . by that woman."

"Sit down, Raymond," Sam urged as he rose and took the empty glass from Saundre's hand. "Let me get you another drink. It'll help you unwind." Raymond did not immediately respond, and Sam repeated, "Go ahead and sit down. It'll help you relax. I know it's been a shattering experience." Sam still recalled how stunned and shaken they had all been when Angie Browning first disappeared. It happened so quickly, and there was no way they could have prevented it.

Raymond sank to a chair and accepted the refilled glass gratefully. Sam took the glass Claire handed him for a refill. As he poured her wine, he said to Raymond, "I don't

agree that it wasn't Elena's doing, Raymond. Somehow, I think it was, at least subconsciously. More than anything else, Elena wanted to reach Damon. I believe that's what happened."

"I think it became an obsession with her," Claire added. "She spent a lot of time thinking about it, planning it."

"I know how much she wanted to reach him, Claire," Raymond agreed. "But after she failed to make the physical transition either time, I didn't think she had the ability to do it. I really didn't think so. That's why I'm so concerned now that she has. There's a force at work in this that I've never encountered before. I don't understand it, and it frightens me. I don't know how to deal with it." And then Raymond confided, "I don't know what to expect from it."

Claire set her wineglass on the coffee table before her and stood, smoothing her gown. She walked slowly to the wall switch near the hall door and flicked it lightly. The room was flooded with a soft, diffuse light. She felt better with the light around her. There was an uncomfortable sensation that came from discussing the occult while in the dark. She knew it was probably a carry-over from her childhood days when she and her friends loved to frighten each other by telling ghost stories in the dark on Halloween, but it wasn't fun anymore. Not now . . . now it was too real.

The afternoon had flowed into evening and the evening into darkness without the three conspirators being aware of the passage of time until Claire suddenly began to feel uncomfortable about the conversation and realized that they were sitting in almost total darkness. The soft glow of the lighting relieved her mind a little. At least, she no longer expected to see her two companions vanish into thin air at any minute. She returned to the sofa and gave a light, affectionate kiss before settling down beside him once more.

"What surprises me most of all about this," she said, "is that you think Elena became Madame Jumel. If I were to make a guess of who she might become, I would have gone through a long list of names before I reached that one. I don't know if I ever would have picked Eliza Jumel, in fact."

"You mean because she and Aaron Burr didn't get along very well?" Raymond asked.

"That's exactly what I mean," Claire replied. "I should think that would only make things harder for them, complicate their efforts to return together."

"I think you've just put into words the very thing that has been bothering me about this," Raymond remarked, rubbing the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger. "All I know about this Madame Jumel and Aaron Burr is that they weren't happily married . . . at least not for long. And that fact worries me. It really does."

"Oh, I don't think you ought to worry about that, Raymond." Sam tried to reassure him. "If she did become Madame Jumel, chances are pretty good that she and Damon will be able to return in that period when they first marry . . . Burr and this Madame Jumel, that is. They must have gotten along pretty well then. And Elena did go back just for the purpose of helping Damon. I think they'll be all right."

"I hope you're right, darling," Claire said. "I know Elena is a very strong-minded gal with a real sense of dedication about this, but it's hard to tell what has happened to Damon in that length of time . . . and this Madame Jumel was apparently a most remarkable woman, and a determined one as well."

Raymond shook his head thoughtfully. "I just don't feel right about this, Sam. I just don't."

"But why? What do you think can go wrong? This is what we've been trying to accomplish ever since Angie Browning returned without Damon," Sam insisted.

"Maybe that's it, Sam," Claire remarked, turning to look at her husband. "Maybe it's because Angie returned and Damon didn't . . . still hasn't, that's worrying Raymond."

Raymond nodded his agreement. "That's it, Claire," he said. "We may be worse off now than before. You see, Sam, now there are two people back in another century. Maybe they'll be able to help each other return, but maybe they won't, and how are we going to know in time?"

Sam frowned as he said, "Now don't you two think you're jumping to conclusions rather quickly here? Elena

just disappeared this afternoon. Give her a chance. None of us thought she could actually make the transfer through time, but she did it. Maybe she'll surprise us with what else she can do. Give her a week or two to make contact with Damon and see what they can do together. After that we can worry . . . not now." He accompanied his suggestion with a sardonic smile.

"I guess you're right, Sam," Raymond replied. "She's certainly earned the right to try to bring Damon back if she can. But I just can't help feeling uneasy about it."

"I don't understand your sudden worry, Raymond," Sam argued. "Just the other night, right here in this living room, you were ready to help Elena make the transfer through time. You didn't make the slightest effort to stop her. You weren't worried then. Why the sudden change now that she's done it?"

"It's the way she's done it that worries me," Raymond explained. "And I was concerned for her the other night, Sam. Don't you remember that I warned her not to allow herself to become someone else?"

"I do," said Claire sitting upright. "I remember you saying that, Raymond. In fact, you told her to come back rather than merge with somebody from that time. It struck me as a little strange because, after all, both Damon and Percy had become merged with someone else. I didn't see that it could do any harm," she told him.

"But Damon Aarons still has not returned, and Mrs. Brooks wouldn't have returned by herself," Raymond explained. "There's far more danger when another personality is involved."

"Yes, I suppose that's true," Claire replied.

"I'm sure it is, but I can't decide what is best to do about it," Raymond told them.

"I don't see that there's anything for you to do," Sam responded. "I thought we all kind of agreed that she should have time to work things out on her own with Damon. I, for one, think they'll be able to return, if we give them enough time."

"I wish I could agree with you, Sam," Raymond remarked. "I know we owe it to Elena to let her try. It's certainly an opportunity that will never come again, and if she and Damon can return by themselves, it will be a

spectacular accomplishment in the field of parapsychology. I don't want to deprive them of that. But time is one thing that we must guard very carefully. If Elena entered the past century at the time Burr married Madame Jumel, then he has only a short time to live."

"That's right," Claire commented. "Burr died the day the divorce was granted, and they were only married a year or so before she filed for it."

"All right; maybe we should decide exactly how long we're willing to wait before we consider making a move to help them," Sam proposed.

Raymond looked from one to the other. "Elena mentioned two weeks. I wouldn't like to wait any longer than that. What do you think?"

Sam considered the suggestion. There was no way of knowing what was too much or too little. Two weeks seemed as good a start as any. "O.K., let's make it two weeks, then," he said.

"You don't think maybe three weeks would be better?" Claire suggested tentatively.

"You have to remember that I'm a guest of the Institute of Parapsychology," Raymond replied. "Even waiting two weeks places me in a rather precarious position. If I try to hide anything from them that they have a right to know, and it's later discovered what I've done, they may feel that I'm not trustworthy and that could be very bad for me. Not only for their sakes but for mine, this must be handled very carefully. If Elena and Dr. Aarons don't return within the time limit—and we do have to tell the institute what has happened to them—Dr. Friedrichson may feel that I'm not totally reliable and refuse to include me in any plans they may devise to help in the return. And if they don't return, we must inform the institute, you realize that. I'm going to have to return to Egypt when my own organization sends for me, which could be soon. I'd have a dreadful time with my own conscience if I went back home without making some effort to see them returned."

The statement caught Claire by surprise. She hadn't given any thought to when Raymond would be returning to his own country. It simply never came up before, and somehow, she managed to put it out of her mind.

"I had no idea your stay was going to be a short one,"

she told him. "I thought you were here on some kind of indefinite work arrangement."

"I did too," remarked Sam. "I just never gave it a second thought. But that puts a different light on it entirely . . . in case there's a problem in Elena and Damon returning. I guess two weeks is about all we ought to allow them. But I still think they're going to do it." He spoke with confidence.

"Sam, I hope you're right—I honestly do," replied Raymond.

"Well, then, I guess it's two weeks," Claire said. "And while we're about it, we ought to think of some sort of cover-up for Elena's sudden disappearance, don't you think so?"

"Be a very good idea," Sam agreed. "It would look strange to have her just vanish. Got any suggestions?"

"I hadn't thought about it," Raymond admitted. "But you're right. They're sure to wonder about her. What do you think I ought to tell them? She has a cold?"

"I don't think you ought to tell them anything," Claire said as she rose and began to stroll about the room, her mind busy conjuring an excuse for Elena's sudden disappearance. No one said anything as she paced her small area three or four times, then she stopped and faced the two men. "Why don't we make it something very logical and simple like amoebic dysentery. We can say that she's been troubled by it since her trip, but it just now got out of hand." She waited only a moment for a reply, then added, "Well, she did visit some fairly primitive areas. She could have picked it up there and it just flared up now. It's a common illness but bad enough to keep her confined to her apartment for a couple of weeks. It's perfect—not too serious but serious enough."

"It sounds plausible," Sam agreed. "What do you think, Raymond?"

"It's all right with me," Raymond replied.

"Good. Tomorrow morning, I'll call the institute and explain that I'm a friend of Elena and that she's down with amoebic dysentery and under a doctor's care." Claire was almost jubilant with her own invention.

"You don't want me to tell them?" Raymond asked.

"No," Claire explained. "If I tell them I'm a friend,

they'll feel she's being cared for. They're less likely to worry. Besides, as you explained, you have to be careful of your own position at the institute."

"Yes, it would be best if you did it, I guess," Raymond agreed. "I still feel very uneasy about the whole thing."

"But it's only for a couple of weeks," Sam reminded him. "After all, it's not a lifetime, is it?"

"No," replied Raymond. "At least, in our time it isn't."

Chapter VIII

Eliza suffered greatly from spells of confusion following the death of Stephen. It made preparations for his funeral even more difficult. She was subject to lapses of attention during which she felt someone else was inside trying to gain control of her thoughts. The feeling upset her. She had always been a strong-minded woman, and it troubled her to think that the unfortunate circumstances surrounding Stephen's death might be preying on her mind.

The ceremony was a simple but moving mass said in the Cathedral of Saint Patrick on Prince Street, the very same church where they had been married twenty-eight years before. She watched with tears streaming down her face as Stephen's casket was lowered into the consecrated ground in the little church cemetery, there in the spot she had selected in the front of the church near the entrance on Mott Street. She had carried with her a rose from the garden at Mount Stephen and threw it into the grave as the workmen began to shovel over the casket with earth. Their life together was now ended.

In the days following Stephen's burial, she tried to keep herself occupied. And there were several pressing matters which required her immediate attention. In January, Mary Eliza had been married to Nelson Chase. They had moved into an apartment rented for them by Eliza at 63 Chambers Street. Eliza was well pleased with her son-in-law, who had the good sense to be impressed with the Jumel wealth, and therefore, he got along very well with Eliza.

As Mary began to grow older and actually reached the age of thirty without any acceptable young men asking for her hand in marriage, Eliza grew concerned, for Mary was of no particular beauty and painfully aware of that fact as she approached spinsterhood. Therefore, it suited everyone quite well when Mary fell in love with Nelson while she and her mother were on a visit to the home of Judge Crippen at Worcester, New York.

Nelson was a law student there, studying with the judge and living with the family. Perceiving that this would be a good match for Mary, Eliza began to make arrangements for the young couple. She agreed to give them an allowance of a thousand dollars a year after they were married and they were to come live with her at the house. Shortly before they were married, however, she decided that they should have their own quarters and secured for them the apartment on Chambers Street. But now she changed her mind. The house was empty and lonesome since Stephen died. There were strange noises and creakings in the house which made it difficult for her to sleep at nights. She was determined to prevail upon them to return to the house to live with her, at least through the remainder of the summer and the fall. In winter, when the house would be cold and drafty, she would consider other possible arrangements if need be.

One of the most pressing matters for Eliza was to find suitable employment for Nelson. It was a matter to which Eliza gave much careful thought. Nelson had considerable ability and initiative, and Eliza meant to see that it was given a chance to flower. She could not retain him as her own attorney because she already had one. Alexander Hamilton, Jr., had brilliantly advised her in the performance of a miracle, a speculative miracle. With his assistance, she had been able to run the value of Stephen's real estate holdings in New York from somewhere in the vicinity of a million dollars to a very enviable three million dollars in the space of three short years. Few men in the country could boast of accomplishing what she—a woman with no business background—had done. Hamilton's legal advice and knowledge of the growth and development of the city had been invaluable to her.

He was able to inform her which other wealthy land

speculators purchased parcels of property and in which areas. Under his astute guidance she sold and bought and resold with an eye not so much given to present condition of the land but to its future value. She considered him indispensable and sympathetic to her needs. Perhaps, someday, if all went well, she might consider retaining Nelson, but he would need a good deal more training and experience before that would be possible. At the moment, she preferred not to request Mr. Hamilton to place him in his own office, because Eliza desired to keep her ventures to herself. So, she set herself about the task of finding proper training and experience for Nelson elsewhere.

When her head was not filled with setting right the lives of the two young people, Eliza still was forced to decide how to deal with the accusation of the murder of Stephen which hung over her head. Naturally, she had informed young Mr. Hamilton, who upon hearing all she could recall of the evening and of the accusation the following morning, assured her that he would be able to handle the case to her best satisfaction, and she placed her defense entirely in his hands. Still, she occasionally sat alone in the house at night, listening to the creaking of the floors, trying to remember exactly what had happened that fateful night. She could recall no more than she had on previous occasions. And she did not allow anyone to mention the name of William in the house. She let slip once or twice that she wished she had never set eyes on him and was determined that she never would again, but she allowed no one to reply to her on those occasions, preferring not to discuss the matter and refusing to allow herself to dwell on it. She determined that in her own matter and in her own leisure she would deal with him, but not now. There was no hurry at the moment for she was convinced of her innocence, and there were matters of greater importance to occupy her thoughts.

There were evenings in the big, lonely house when Eliza grew irritable because Mary and Nelson were taking so long about returning to live with her at Mount Stephen. She loved the house and hated the thought of leaving it again to live anywhere else, even for a short time. Still, it was a big empty barn of a home for one woman to occupy by herself. Even the eight servants who were there to

care for it were not company. But she never tired of roaming through it, admiring the large center hall which opened onto the front portico. From there she could see the Hudson River and beyond that the lofty rocky cliffs of New Jersey, which bounded the river on the west. To the east, stretched the East River, Hell Gate and the Sound, where shipping was constantly passing and repassing. Before her, in the distance she could see the city of New York and the high hills of Staten Island, more than twenty miles away. From the porch vantage point, she could also see Long Island, Westchester, Morrisania, and the village of Harlem with its cultivated fields and neat farmhouses.

At times she did nothing but roam from room to room, running her hands lovingly over favorite pieces of furniture and sighing in remembrance of other days. In the spacious dining room on the right with its alcove and closets and adjoining pantry and storeroom, she kept the Pembroke table of Santo Domingo mahogany where Louis Philippe of France himself had dined while an honored guest at the mansion. Also in the dining room were placed the sideboard and two console tables to match which had been Napoleon's own. The set had marble column supports and marble tops. The sideboard had a mirrored back and Eliza loved to imagine the former Emperor and Josephine admiring themselves before it.

Napoleon had been a hero to Eliza, and after his exile, she set about acquiring what she could of his former possessions. Those things she could bring home with her on Stephen's ship, she placed strategically among her other furnishings in the mansion. Alas, Napoleon's own coach in which she loved to ride through the streets of Paris, she could not bring with her.

As she wandered about the house, Eliza would stroll through the handsome parlor to the left of the entry and then into the back room, which she envisioned turning into a nursery for Mary's children some day, through a room at the rear of the hall, and into the large oblong octagonal room at the back of the house. This was her favorite room on the ground floor. It was all of thirty-two feet by twenty-two feet with six sash windows, a marble chimney piece and a lofty, airy ceiling. Here is where she displayed the sofa and eight chairs that had belonged to Napoleon

when he was First Consul. When she tired of the ground floor, Eliza would climb the light easy mahogany staircase to the second floor and roam through the seven bedchambers there.

Four of the rooms were equipped with fireplaces and marble hearths, and there was a large hall which led to a gallery under the portico roof, affording an even more splendid view of the countryside. She rarely wandered to the upper floor these days, but there were five lodging-rooms, should they be needed, three with fireplaces. And underneath the building were several other rooms, a large commodious kitchen and laundry and wine cellar, storeroom, kitchen pantry, sleeping apartments for her servants, and a most complete dairy room. Nowhere was there another house in the vicinity to compare with Mount Stephen, and Eliza, for all her loneliness would not part with it.

However, to her great dismay, the servants began to whisper of a ghost in the house, the ghost of Stephen. Although she ridiculed the idea, there were times as she sat in the octagonal room late at night over a game of solitaire when she would feel uncomfortable and apprehensive. She knew for a certainty that the servants had retired for the night, yet there would be the strange noises coming from the hall. When she looked up abruptly, she half expected to see someone standing there watching her at cards, but no—always there would be nothing but empty space.

Even the eventual arrival of Mary and Nelson could not quell the uneasiness which had overtaken her in their absence. With the onset of winter, she found the thought of remaining in the house a strain she could no longer hide. The rooms were cold and drafty, and—unless blazing fires were kept up in all the rooms—there was a chill through the house which could not be dispelled. Eliza convinced herself that this feeling of alienation toward the house could best be remedied by a short time away from it and in the company of her gay, Bohemian friends in the city where she could rest and recover her health and spirits.

With the approach of winter, also, came the welcome news that she had been absolved of the accusation of the murder of Stephen. When the case finally came to court,

and it was time for her to be formally accused, there was no accuser to step forward and name her. *No, your honor, Eliza did not know the present whereabouts of the servant William.* From her other servants, she learned that he had desired to return to his home in Jamaica for a short visit with his family there, and she readily gave permission for the trip. But nothing had been heard from him since, and he had not returned to Mount Stephen. Therefore, in consideration of the fact that there was no one to accuse her of the foul crime, she was free of the charge.

As they left the City Hall together, Eliza thanked Mr. Hamilton most extravagantly and promised to send him a generous check for his special efforts on her behalf. Her smile that afternoon was warmer and more carefree than it had been since the whole difficulty commenced. She was now free of suspicion and legally in control of one of the most extensive fortunes in the entire country.

A revitalized and determined Eliza promptly secured for herself a suite at the new hotel which had recently been built by John Jacob Astor. It was on Broadway directly across from the City Hall. She also secured satisfactory new quarters for Mary and Nelson not too far distant on the corner of Grand and Elm Streets. The winter promised to be a diverting one.

However, it did not take long for a rumor to begin circulating about the city that Eliza had been driven from the house by the ghost of the poor murdered Stephen and that William had not really gone to Jamaica as she claimed but had himself, most likely been murdered to prevent his testifying against Eliza. After all, a woman with her notorious past, a woman who had once been a well known "lady-of-the-night" would be capable of doing almost anything.

Now society closed their doors not behind her back but in her very face. It was an accusation and an affront she had never anticipated. Although the rumors disturbed her, she refused to acknowledge them. She tried to keep herself busy with the contemporary literati: Cooper, Fitz-Greene Halleck, George Bancroft, N. P. Willis, and the colony of political refugees from France, who were a gay and diverting lot in spite of their exile. Among these she was received most graciously. As long as she was in their company,

her troubles did not prey on her conscience. For there were troubles which she had not anticipated and from quarters she never dreamed would be troublesome.

Indeed, at times, it seemed that her travails were endless. Stephen's poor relatives in France, to whom he had apparently promised a large share of his fortune, hired a lawyer named Connolly to represent them in a suit against Eliza for their promised share. With fire in her large blue-violet eyes, she marched herself into Mr. Hamilton's office to inform him of the lawsuit. As always, in his calm and professional manner, he was able to soothe her ruffled temperament and pledged to deal with the claimants at once through their chosen attorney, Mr. Connolly.

"I will not give up a penny of what is rightfully mine," she shouted. "You may tell them that."

"Never fear, Madame Jumel. I will see that they are apprised of the situation. I shall inform Mr. Connolly that because of the power of attorney he extended to you, at his death, Mr. Jumel was without funds and without property, that everything had been transferred into the ownership of his daughter and his wife. It is quite simple. He had nothing to leave them in France."

"But what if they question my power of attorney. Are you certain that it states that his property was mine to deal with as I saw fit. Does it say so in black-and-white print? I know that was his intent, but does it say so beyond question? Does it protect me completely?"

"Soothe your mind, madame. It is all quite legal. I would never have allowed you to engage in the extensive business negotiations that you have were it not specifically so stated."

Hamilton rifled through a large portfolio marked "Jumel" until he found a sheet of paper dated May 15, 1826. He scanned it quickly and pointing his finger to the paragraph, began to read to her. "... to transact and manage his affairs at New York or at any place in the state of New York, and for him and in his name and for his use and in his behalf to sell ... Ah, there, you see, that's the key right there ... to sell ... all or any part of the real estate that he may have belonging to him ... in the state of New York and upon sale thereof or any part

thereof to sign, seal, and execute all and every such contracts, agreements, conveyances, and assurances, and upon the receipt of the moneys arising from such sale or sales to give sufficient release, acquittance and discharge for the same.' Now, there, you see, it does not say that you are to turn over to Mr. Jumel or the person or persons he may designate any part of moneys received. What it does charge you with is to explain what is done with those moneys, and that you most certainly have complied with to the letter. In every negotiation, in every sale or purchase, Stephen Jumel was appropriately informed. Nowhere in writing were you charged with sharing any of your possessions or moneys with his relatives in France, and you need have no worry on that score. Everything is in your name or the name of Mary Eliza. Not a living soul has claim on you, Madame Jumel."

Hamilton had not escaped the rumors concerning Madame Jumel's actions and knew that she must be troubled by the false accusations. He immediately regretted his choice of the phrase "living soul" and hoped that madame did not place any special emphasis on it. He scrutinized her face carefully and was heartened to see that she had apparently been so intent upon the power of attorney contract and his interpretation thereof that she had not caught that specific phrase. Her expression was relaxed and a smile sprang lightly to her well-shaped mouth.

"Yes, yes, all of what you say is true, Mr. Hamilton. I have only exercised those powers freely given me by my husband. There is no reason I should be concerned, is there?" She asked for even more reassurance.

"No, my dear madame, there is not the slightest indication that you should trouble yourself further about this matter. I shall promptly reply and explain the situation fully to Mr. Connolly. I'm positive that you have heard the last of it."

"Again my mind is at rest, thanks to your skill, Mr. Hamilton. I should be hard pressed to keep my affairs straight were it not for you," Eliza said graciously.

"I am gratified that I can be of service to you, Madame Jumel," Hamilton replied gallantly.

"You are not 'of service' to me, Mr. Hamilton, indeed,

you are indispensable to me, I warrant," corrected Eliza with a chuckle.

"As you say, madame," Hamilton agreed, joining her chuckle.

Eliza stood to go, wrapping her coat warmly about herself to ward off the chill wind without.

"And how does your noble mother fare these days, Mr. Hamilton?" she asked.

"My mother is a tower of strength, madame, and does very well, thank you," he replied.

"She has kept the Grange, I presume?" she asked.

"Yes, the house has great meaning for her," Hamilton said. "Father designed and supervised it and the gardens. They had only lived there a short while before he—before he died, you may recall."

"I thought that was true. I can well imagine what memories are there that she cherishes. And some of the children remain there with her, I'm sure?"

"Enough, I daresay, to keep her busy. We are not all living there with her, but even so, in a family as large as ours, so few as half would be enough to keep her occupied," he laughed.

"I am sure of that indeed," she remarked. She paused a moment before she could bring herself to ask what remained on her mind, but she sincerely wished to know. "And your sister? Your sister, Angelica, how does she improve?"

"I regret to tell you, madame, that she does not. The doctor insures us that there is no hope of her ever recovering herself. She is hopelessly insane forever."

"How sad to hear, Mr. Hamilton. She was such a beautiful young girl, so gentle and sensitive," Eliza lamented.

"Too much so, madame. Her delicate nature could not stand up to the cruel blows repeatedly reined on her by fate. She defended herself in the only way she could—by withdrawing from the world. There is a kind of tranquillity in her world now and our sister Elizabeth is devoted to her. She does not lack for love." A most melancholy countenance had overtaken his features as he spoke of his unfortunate sister. It could not fail to bring to mind as well the death of his esteemed father, killed in the fateful duel with Aaron Burr. For it was following the death of his fa-

ther that Angelica had lost her reason. More than twenty-five years had passed since the death of his father, still he could not think of either him or Angelica without being filled with a great sadness.

"I have always considered your mother a most admirable woman, Mr. Hamilton," remarked Eliza.

"That is kind of you to say, madame."

"And a most fortunate one," she added.

"How is that so, Madame Jumel?" His melancholy showed signs of giving way to perplexity.

"She was blessed with eight children, all of them bright, handsome and gifted, and all of them with a strong feeling of affection and family ties. That is something to be envied. Not all women are so blessed, Mr. Hamilton."

"Yes, in that regard, she is indeed, among the most fortunate of women," he agreed.

"When I have returned to Mount Stephen in the spring, were I to send her an invitation to have tea with me, do you suppose she might be inclined to accept?" Eliza inquired.

"That would be most gracious of you, madame, and I'm certain that she would be delighted to receive such an invitation. Mama has an interest in my law cases and we have often discussed you." Smiling, he added, "I'm sure she would be pleased."

"Then she must be my guest shortly after I return to open Mount Stephen again. If you think she might enjoy it, I shall send Angelica a music box; for I remember what a talented musician she was."

"That would please her greatly, madame, and it is most amiable of you to think of it."

"I shall attend to it this very day. Again, to you, sir, my most hearty thanks. You have eased my mind completely." Eliza turned toward the door as she concluded her remarks.

"It is my duty as your lawyer and my pleasure as your friend, Madame Jumel," he said gallantly as he held open the door for her to exit.

Before leaving, she smiled radiantly at him and said, "You are very like your father, Mr. Hamilton. Though I knew him only slightly, I was much taken with his gentlemanly charm. He would be extremely proud could he but

see how fine a lawyer and courteous a gentleman you've become. You do him credit." Then after a slight pause with a hint of coyness in her voice she added with a sideways glance, "Would I were but thirty years younger again," and swept through the door before he could recover his wits to make reply. As she retreated before him, a rueful smile sneaked about his lips and a twinkle appeared in his eye. He found that he was pleased by her parting remark.

For the first time in several months, Eliza was gay, nearly to the point of being giddy. She was free of encumbrances. Mr. Hamilton had set her mind to rest on that point. Now the mansion, the fortune, both money and land, was completely hers. It was time for the headaches and worries of the accusations and rumors to be permanently pushed behind her. She felt that something must be done to celebrate her new freedom, but what should she do to celebrate? She could not decide. Perhaps she should purchase a gift for Mary and Nelson, but they had need of so little that it did seem a bit foolish. Besides, she so often plied them with gifts that it would not seem at all out of the ordinary. It would have no special meaning either for them or for her. This should be something very particularly for her, but what?

Should she dine with them this evening at the Astor House? Perhaps the theater as well? Or the opera? She considered these thoughts for a moment or two as she leisurely strolled along Broadway in the direction of the Astor House. But it did not strike her as being a proper entertainment for her for this evening. The theater was always an interesting diversion—but tonight? Surely, there must be something else. Perhaps a party with some of her foreign friends. Even so, what she was to do with herself for the rest of the day?

Directly ahead of her, only a few steps from the entrance to the hotel stood a figure immediately recognizable. What an irony that she should come upon him at this particular time. For she had just left Alexander Hamilton, Jr., and there before her stood the man who killed his father, Aaron Burr. He was engaged in a most intense conversation with a young friend of his, a Charles Burdett.

Though Eliza had never met the young man, he had been pointed out to her on occasion as a ward of Colonel Burr.

He had been provided an excellent education at the expense and under the supervision of his benefactor, and it was said that they were quite fond of one another. Rumors seemed to follow Colonel Burr to the same extent that they followed Eliza, and she had heard that Burdett might possibly be the illegitimate son of the older man. Burr would neither admit nor deny the truth to the rumor. When asked directly about such matters, he would invariably reply, "When a lady does me the honor to name me the father of her child, I trust I shall always be too gallant to show myself ungrateful for the favor." There the matter was always left, gossip for the tongues of the town to wag about. Truth to tell, it lent an air of mystery to the already mysterious Colonel Burr, and not only was he aware of this air of mystery, but he enjoyed it.

As she approached the two men, Eliza slowed her steps and studied the figures and the features of Charles Burdett and Aaron Burr. There seemed to be little physical resemblance between them, still appearances could be deceiving, she concluded. Suddenly, as she still examined the men, her mind became a trifle hazy, her thoughts a trifle blurred. She was experiencing trouble with her concentration. Eliza was aware of the sensation enough times in recent days to know that she was about to suffer a lapse of thought . . . it was the same vagueness which had come upon her about the time that Stephen died, and it was, for some unknown reason, choosing this very ill-advised time to plague her once more. But she would have none of that preoccupation in public.

While she could tolerate it in the privacy of her own chambers, she would not make a general display of herself on the city street. Just as suddenly, another thought occurred to her. It seemed such a natural thing that she could not understand why it had taken her so much time to devise it. She must speak to Aaron Burr about placing Nelson in his office. He would be a most excellent example for the young man because of his brilliant legal mind.

For a moment she paused. Perhaps, she should first consult Mr. Hamilton on the advisability of such a move; but no, she was aware that her own attorney still bore hard

feelings for the man who murdered his father. However, the fact remained that Burr was greatly sought after as a lawyer and a position in his office would be a great advantage for her son-in-law. Without waiting for the two men to reach a lull in their animated discussion, Eliza burst in upon them.

"My dear Colonel Burr, what a pleasant revelation to find you here," she said, rushing forward with her hand extended.

In midsentence, Burr stopped, turned to her, and smiled. He had been so engrossed in his conversation that he was truly unaware of her until she spoke. He reached for the hand she thrust toward him and raised it to his lips.

"You seem as radiant as the sunshine on this autumn day, Madame Jumel," he said.

"Mr. Vice-President, you will go to your grave with some gallant, flattering phrase on your lips," she replied, blushing with pleasure.

"I can think of no more pleasant way to depart this world, madame," he replied. Turning to Burdett, he said, "Madame, may I present to you a brilliant but stubborn young friend of mine, Mr. Charles Burdett, in whom I take too keen an interest for my own well-being."

"Mr. Burdett, how do you do," she said politely. "And pray tell, what have you done to incur the sarcasm of the former Vice-President? I trust it was some horrendous transgression to warrant so great a displeasure, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Burdett removed his hat and smiled knowingly at her. "It is a pleasure to meet you, madame, but I fear it is a time unfavorable to me. I seem to have fallen heir to the wrath of Colonel Burr by disagreeing with an opinion he just stated—a foolhardy thing to do, you will admit."

"Ha!" Eliza threw back her head and laughed to think that this young man—or any young man—would dare oppose the dynamic Aaron Burr. "But surely, you did not propose to change that opinion in him, young man?"

"A vain hope, madame, I know, but I confess I did," Burdett replied with a rueful smile. "However, your timely presence has afforded me the perfect opportunity to retire with grace, neither winning nor losing the argument. I thank you, madame, and a good day to you." He raised

his hat and smiled at her again, then turning to Burr, he said, "Sir, you are incorrigible, and you are quite in error. Good day to you, Colonel Burr." With that he turned and promptly walked down the street.

"But astute . . . very astute, you must admit," Burr called after his young friend, who turned and waved his hand in reply.

Transferring all his attention and charm to Eliza, Burr remarked, "I was most distressed, my dear lady, to learn of your esteemed husband's death and your own subsequent troubles. Please accept my somewhat belated sympathies."

"His death was quite sudden," replied Eliza. "most unexpected, even though he was advanced in age, the doctor gave us reason to hope that he would recover. It was a deep sadness to us that he did not."

"You seem to have borne up quite well under all your tribulations, madame. You appear in exceptionally fine spirits today." Burr, was, as always, most polite, and he hit upon the perfectly correct note to appeal to Eliza this afternoon.

"I have just come from a conference with my attorney. . . ." She hesitated, uncertain whether she should mention the name.

Burr, sensing the cause of her hesitancy, smiled pleasantly. "Yes, I know that Alexander Hamilton, Jr., is your attorney, madame."

She could not prevent the look of surprise on her face. She had no idea he had knowledge of the fact.

"Ah, you need not be surprised," Burr continued, seeing her look of astonishment. "He has proved himself a most excellent young lawyer. His mother has good reason to be proud of him in his career."

"I . . . I didn't know . . . if . . . the name, you see, I wasn't sure. . . ."

"I am able to hear the name and not cringe, madame," Burr said. Then as he seemed to grow a bit wistful, he added, "However, I confess that had I read Voltaire less and Sterne more, I might have thought the world wide enough for Hamilton and me."

He did not smile as he made the remark, and he was not looking at her in particular. It was difficult for her to

tell where he was looking, what he was seeing. His eyes seemed to be fixed on some point in time and space beyond her. There was a vague stirring inside her again, the same disturbing restlessness she had just succeeded in fighting down. She determined not to allow herself to dwell on it. In a voice louder than she expected, she said, "Colonel Burr, I am most happy this afternoon and feel that a small celebration is in order. I am in search of a companion to share with me my levity. I do now recall a long-ago promise. Would you do me the kindness of dining with me in my hotel?"

"How kind of you to think me worthy of sharing good fortune with you," he said. "I should be most pleased to accompany you."

"And I must warn you that I have a favor to ask of you also," she told him. "Not too large, however, and it will not be too difficult for you to grant. Still, it would be of great service to me."

"And if I must refuse, will you take away the dinner you have promised me?" he asked, jokingly.

"Oh, no, dear sir. The dinner is yours whether or no, never fear." She laughed. Contemplating a pleasant dinner in his company, she was certain she had made the right decision, both in her choice of a companion for the evening and for the employment of Nelson.

As they turned to enter the hotel, she asked, "Will you mind if we dine in the Astor House rather than my suite? I should not be able to guarantee a proper meal from my cook on such short notification."

"The highlight of the meal will be the pleasure of your presence, madame; therefore, wherever you choose, will be of little importance to me." He offered her his arm, and with a sprightly step escorted her into the restaurant.

Seated in a private corner, they remained a few moments before either of them spoke. Eliza did not want to be interrupted or overheard when the waiter came to inquire as to their choice of food for the meal.

Eliza announced that she would enjoy a consommé followed by the oysters scalloped in their shells and a "jumble" of vegetables. Burr ordered for himself a consommé as well, to be followed by a broiled capon with jelly and rice and endive with sauce. With it he requested

a bottle of fine claret, his favorite wine. After the waiter vanished to the kitchen, Burr leaned toward Eliza, and in his most conspiratorial manner asked, "Now what is the favor you seek from me that is worth such a fine meal, madame?"

"No, no, this is not to smack in any way of bribery, sir, I beseech you to think not so. The meal is for your companionship only. I do believe that after my conference with Mr. Hamilton today, I am at last free of all lawsuits stemming from the death of my late husband. He assures me that Stephen's relatives have no legal claim to any of the property as it was all transferred to Mary's name, with but a few things transferred to mine, before Stephen died, and the power-of-attorney contract clearly states that I could do that."

"If that is true, then I would be inclined to agree," Burr said reassuringly. "There can be no claim on his property if he had no property to claim, dear lady. It is quite plain and simple. If the power of attorney states clearly that you have the right to buy, sell, and transfer property, then you have no cause to be concerned."

"I'm gratified to find that you agree, Colonel Burr. And since that is the final lawsuit, I am much relieved. That is the cause for celebration this evening, the fact that I have survived all the legal problems which have arisen from Stephen's death and can look forward to no more."

"You might well be pleased, madame. It has not been an easy time for you, I daresay."

"No, it has not, and now my Mary is Mrs. Nelson Chase and not living with me, it is even more difficult, for I am entirely alone most of the time," she confided.

"And that, I assume, is the reason you have decided to stay in the city?" he asked. "Have you, then, given up your magnificent home for good and all?"

"Oh no, I could never part with the house. I . . . it is as though it were a part of me . . . or rather that I were a part of it. I could never give it up entirely. I have only taken a suite in the hotel for the winter. I long for Mary and for some contact with the world of lively people. And the house is cold and drafty in the wintertime. I shall return again, when the first blossoms of spring appear."

For another moment they sat, neither of them speaking.

At length, he broke the silence. "And now what favor may I grant you to add to your happiness? You have only to ask the favor, and I shall do my utmost to grant it."

"My son-in-law, Nelson Chase, requires a placement in a law office," she said. "He has worked with Judge Crippin in Worcester, but has not been placed since his marriage to Mary Eliza. I can think of none better for him than your office, Colonel Burr, if you would be so kind as to consider him for an associate. He is young and willing and bright. I am certain that he has a most promising future and will do you credit. As I said, Mary has a great deal of property in her name, so the money would not be their primary concern. It is a suitable placement that he seeks."

"A simple request, madame, and simply granted. Have young Mr. Chase come to my offices in the morning. My business is thriving, and I cannot handle nearly all the work myself. I would be most pleased to receive him into the office."

"You're very kind, colonel," Eliza said, smiling. "I shall remember your kindness."

"I pray you do, madame, for I may have a request to ask of you some future time, and I shall remind you of this day." His eyes flashed mischievously at her.

It was not until they had finished with the meal and Burr ordered for each of them a "soft vanilla custard" and coffee that Eliza began to grow uncomfortably distracted again. She could not tell why, but she knew it had to do with the presence of Colonel Burr, and it was something that she would not be able to suppress this time, no matter how she struggled.

Once Elena began to make herself known, the transition from Eliza to Elena was rapid. She became aware that Burr was also Damon Aarons, and she determined to confront him. She wondered if he, too, were somehow subject to the mind and actions of Aaron Burr. How would she be able to talk with him if Burr refused to allow it? In the short space of time that she had been coexisting with Eliza, she knew that when Eliza did not wish to surrender her mind, Elena could in no way induce her counterpart to give in.

Should she speak directly to Damon, she wondered. Would Burr make a scene if she did? It would be much

easier for them both if she could only be assured of his cooperation, but how could that be? This was very new to her, and she must proceed with care. She considered that it might be wiser to wait until she could speak to him in a bit more private setting. She did not want her first encounter with him to be a disaster. That would only make it more difficult to approach him in the future.

"Would you care to continue the evening in my suite, Colonel Burr?" she asked, "I could offer you an excellent brandy, and I would challenge you to a game of cards, if you wish. What do you prefer? Whist? Loo? Oh, not to gamble. We would not play for money. For I am certain that I have a good deal more money than you that I could lose without a care, and it would only cause pitfalls in our friendship were you to become indebted to me for a large sum lost in gambling. Money is a very serious matter to me, and I treasure it. I care for it, and I protect it. It can secure for me whatever I desire, and therefore, I also respect it. You would do well to follow my example, sir."

"Then let us not gamble for money, madame, for you would most certainly be the loser, and I would not have our friendship burdened with that heavy an oppression. I fear it would serve to end an amiable relationship before it had the opportunity to reach full flower."

"Very well, then, it is satisfactory to each. We will play at cards for the sport."

"Nay, madame, I fear I must plead fatigue this evening. Your company, your conversation, and your dinner have been most delightful. In fact, you have provided me the most pleasant few hours I have spent in this week, but there are one or two points of law I must discuss with one of the clerks in my office this evening, that I may impress them firmly in my mind before I appear in court on behalf of my client in the morning. I shall have to offer my apologies, with profound regrets."

"No. No. You can't leave like this. You must come with me ... for a little only. I have ... something ..." Elena wondered just how far she dare go in revealing her presence. There was no sign of recognition on the part of Damon, and surely, there would be something if he realized who she really was. She must be alone with him. She must persuade him to come with her to her suite. There

she could talk with him. But how could it be done? She could not drag him there by force, certainly.

"Colonel Burr," she purred in a voice softly coaxing. "You must not leave me so. The evening will be long and lonely for me. I shall have nothing to amuse me but a solitary game of cards, and that is no form of celebration. I beg you, for a little time, stay with me, be my guest. Surely, it cannot take so long for the country's finest legal mind to freshen itself as regards some point of law." Then she lowered her voice to a whisper and added, "I have something of the utmost urgency that I must discuss with you."

"Why did you not mention this before? What is it, madame?" He inquired.

"No, no. I can not discuss it with you here. It is of a most private nature, and the matter is most serious," she insisted.

"Then, do you not think that it might be preferable to discuss such a subject with your own attorney, Mr. Hamilton, on the morrow?"

"It cannot wait. And it is not his advice that is needed in this. It is for your ears and yours alone, that I shall reveal this matter," she persisted. "No other one can assist me ... can advise me. You must grant me this evening."

Burr was perplexed and a bit flattered by her insistence, but he remained puzzled as to what this matter could be for his ears alone. Private matters which ladies could reveal only to him were usually the result of his own pursuit. They did not, as a general rule these days, thrust themselves on him in this fashion. But as he studied the face of Eliza Jumel, he realized that for her it was much too serious to be a suggestion of any frivolity between the two of them. Too bad, he thought, but ...

"Very well, madame. Since it is a matter of great urgency to you, and since you will reveal this matter to no one but myself, I shall be happy to postpone my meeting with Francis and make it a special point to meet with him at an early hour tomorrow before going to court. That settled, I am completely at your disposal for as long as you wish it." He accompanied her acceptance with a wink.

Elena frowned at that. She wondered if it were Damon Aarons speaking after all, teasing her in this manner. But

that wasn't likely. He would be so surprised to find her here and coexisting with Eliza Jumel, of all the inhabitants of New York, that he would not be able to dissemble in that fashion.

Elena insisted that Burr must pay for dinner, and she surreptitiously passed to him a bill of a very large denomination. He accepted it graciously with no show of surprise and paid for the meal with a great flourish. She could not suppress a smile at the manner in which he handled the waiter.

When they were safely in the sitting room of her suite, she poured a glass of brandy for each of them. She felt she could use one, and she knew that as soon as the matter was totally revealed to Damon Aarons, he would need one as well.

Burr seated himself on the rose satin sofa, while Elena sat opposite him in a chair of a very pale cream color. She began to sip at her brandy and to stare at Burr in turns. She hoped that given time, Damon would recognize her of his own accord. But Aaron Burr stared at her, watching intently, waiting for an explanation, and saying nothing. He wondered how long it would take before she revealed whatever it was that so disturbed her. He was extremely curious and growing more so by the minute.

"Well, my dear, don't you recognize me?" When she could stand the quiet suspense no longer, she finally asked the question.

Burr threw back his head and laughed. "Why, of course, I do. Why should I not? Is this some sort of new game that you're playing with me? If you are, you must explain the rules."

Elena gazed at him sternly. "No, it is most certainly not a game. I am quite serious." She wasn't certain what kind of effect it might have on him, but she determined to take the most direct approach, come what may.

"Damon Aarons. Look at me. I must speak with you, and I insist that it be now." She waited as he ceased his laughing and sat erect. His eyes concentrated on her face. He must be trying to recognize her voice, her manner, and the face that was similar but not identical to Eliza.

"What did you say to me?" he asked, his manner quite puzzled.

"I said I must speak to you now, Damon. I am Elena, and I have come to help you. You must speak to me. I know that you are Aaron Burr. Percy told me so."

At the mention of Percy's name, a spark of recognition came to his eyes. Then, as she watched, his face clouded over, and his eyes became sharper. His manner softened perceptibly and he stood up as though he had received a shock of great force.

"My God! Elena! How?" he said and then fell silent, fearing that he might be mistaken, hoping one minute that he was and the next that he was not.

"Yes, Damon, it's true," she said. "It's really me. It took me a great long while, but I finally was able to come to you."

He stepped forward and raised her from her chair, embracing her as he whispered, "Elena, Elena, happy as I am to see you, I'm so sorry to have brought you to this. I'm so sorry. But never fear." His voice which had been soft and pensive a moment before grew firm and resolute as he added, "We will return, I promise you. Together we will return to the twentieth century. I won't fail you as I failed Percy."

"Damon, you didn't fail Percy. She has returned, and you and I will return, also. That is why I have come back to this century, to make it possible for you to return."

"But the danger to you . . . you should not have come, Elena. I'm sorry and I'm glad that you did, both at the same time, if that makes any sense to you."

Gently disengaging herself, Elena led Damon again to the sofa where she sat gracefully, pulling him to the seat beside her. She held his hand as she spoke to him in a steady and soothing voice.

"Damon, you mustn't worry about me. I am perfectly fine. Actually, I am in splendid health and enjoying myself rather immensely. I can't say to you that I have everything I've ever wanted in life, but I am enormously wealthy and loving it. I also love my home, Mount Stephen. Do you know the mansion in Harlem Heights where I live, Damon?"

"Elena, listen to what you're saying. Listen!" He was alarmed by the casual way she was combining her own life and personality with that of Eliza Jumel. The mansion did

not belong to Elena, but to Eliza. She had not made that distinction. Perhaps it was merely a slip of the tongue, but it was enough to cause him apprehension.

"Damon, I thought you would be more pleased to see me. But here you are scolding me when I've done nothing wrong. What is the trouble? Surely, you can't be sorry that I came to help you."

"No, Elena. I can't say yet whether I am glad you are here or saddened by it. Perhaps it's only that you haven't totally adjusted to this unnatural existence. How long have you been in this time?"

"Only a few months. Let me think . . . it was just at the time that Stephen Jumel died. I shall never forget that experience. It was a most horrible . . . but that's past." And Elena added pensively, "Poor man, poor man."

"Yes, I understand it must have been very difficult for you. But try to forget the unpleasantness." Burr was aware of Stephen Jumel's death and the scandal attached to it. It must have been a dreadful beginning for her. He patted her hand fondly. "Poor Elena. I suppose it's not too strange, considering all you've been through, that you would have a bit of confusion over identity. But if you've been here that long, why did you make no effort to contact me before now? Why did you wait?"

"I wanted to speak with you," she told him. "I came back expressly to reach you, Damon. You know that's true. The opportunity simply has not been there."

"I would have come to you if I had suspected, but that's no matter now. You've found me, and I'm truly grateful. Tell me how you came here."

"Very much the same way you did, I imagine, but I suspect that I had more help from this woman Eliza Jumel. She seems to me to have a very strong mind, a very strong spirit."

"Yes, she is a most exceptional woman, a woman of great determination who has had to fight and struggle against the greatest of odds to achieve the things she has." Then Damon pointedly said, "We mustn't allow you to spend too much time here under her domination."

"You needn't worry about me, Damon. I have a very strong determination of my own," she replied. "Oh, but I'm so relieved to finally reach you; though, you're a bit

older than I thought you would be. The time has sped by for you. But we'll have you back among your own friends very soon now."

"Yes, Elena, I have become a very old man here in this life. But tell me . . . you mentioned Percy. Did she return safely? Did you see her? Is she well?" He grew excited at the prospect of learning the fate of Percy Brooks.

"Yes, to the three questions. She returned and recovered from her injury, and I went to Iowa to see and talk with her. I wanted to hear everything she could tell me about her experiences with you."

"Yes, I suspected she might not be well," he said thoughtfully, "I'm glad to hear she recovered. What was the injury?"

"She had a very serious auto accident. She suffered a severe head injury and was in the hospital in a dangerous condition for some time. In fact, the doctors were certain that she was about to die. But she had no damage to the brain, and she is now completely recovered and gaining back her strength."

"You're sure that there was no damage to her brain? Her mind is all right?"

"No damage whatsoever," Elena assured him. "She's perfectly fine. It was a miracle, but she's completely well."

"That injury, of course, would explain why she experienced such pain when she attempted to return to herself," he said. "I couldn't imagine what it would be except that it had to be something from her own life that was causing her great pain. But how did she return by herself? I'm amazed that she was able to do it. It was my greatest hope for her, naturally, but I can't imagine that she was able to accomplish it without my help. I've been so afraid all this time that she expired when Theodosia vanished at sea. It would have been a dreadful thing for her to perish because she came back to this life to help me. I could never quite bring myself to accept that she was actually gone. But tell me, how she was able to return."

"She had my help in place of yours, Damon. Actually she had mine and Gordon's . . . and Claire and Sam had a hand in it, too. But we were able to convince her that you had already returned and that she must allow us to bring her back. It took some convincing because she refused to

leave you alone. But you remember the watch you gave her? We were able to convince her with that. She naturally associated the watch with you, and we were able to bring her back that way. Now she's recovered and returned to Iowa where she's taking life as easy as she can. When I went there, she remembered everything about the life as Theodosia and was able to tell me enough about you and the passage of time here so that by doing some research on Burr's life, I knew pretty well that if I could come back, I'd find you here."

"You have no idea what a comfort it is to finally know that she is well and safely returned . . . but poor Theodosia . . . poor beautiful, incomparable Theodosia." Tears glistened in his eyes as he spoke her name tenderly.

Elena watched him carefully, wondering but saying nothing. She was afraid to inquire further into his relationship with the "incomparable Theodosia." She wasn't certain that it was something she really wanted to know. Besides, Theodosia was dead, and it was best to leave the past undisturbed, unremembered.

When he had sufficiently recovered himself, she asked, "But why haven't you returned, Damon? Is it that you can't break away from Burr?"

"No, it was in the beginning. He was so determined that his scheme for founding an empire in Mexico should succeed that there was no question of breaking with him. He was full of plans and schemes and dreams. He was a constant frenzy of activity, never still, never resting. His mind refused to release my body . . . and I can tell you that the mind of Aaron Burr in his prime was formidable . . . brilliant . . . and then, since the disappearance of Theodosia, there have been such rumors, and some of them with a ring of possibility to them, that I felt I didn't dare return for fear I would leave Percy stranded here in the life with Theodosia. Several times I gave serious contemplation to going back just in case Theodosia had actually perished, but when it came time . . . the very moment . . . I couldn't do it. I couldn't bear the thought of leaving Percy alone in this century."

"She's quite safe now, and you're free to leave whenever you desire," Elena told him.

"Yes, I am now. I shall always be obliged to you, Elena, for the rescue."

"There shouldn't be any trouble separating yourself from the mind of Aaron Burr any longer, should there?" she asked.

"No," he answered with a slightly pensive smile. "Actually, his life was ended, for all intents and purposes, when he lost Gampy and Theodosia. It was only a few years later that he lost his one remaining link to them when Joseph Alston died. That stole from Burr all his hopes of becoming a behind-the-scenes political power. For a while he hoped that Joseph would be able to rally himself and enter the political arena on a national level, but Joseph . . . poor Joseph . . . was totally lost without his wife and son and never took an interest in anything after their deaths. I'm convinced that he literally died of a broken heart."

"Poor Damon, as well," said Elena. "I'm afraid it hasn't been an easy time for you."

"No . . . not easy . . . but worthwhile, I think. But I will give it up with no regrets. Percy told me that her sister had also returned. Is she well?"

"Oh, my yes. I nearly forgot about her. How long ago that must seem to you."

"It has been long in this lifetime, Elena," he admitted. "Tell me, although I almost cringe to ask it, how much time has elapsed since I left the twentieth century? Is it even worth the trouble for me to return there?"

"Oh, I should say it is. You'll be amazed to learn that only a little more than a year has elapsed. Only a year of your life for such an incredible experience. That's not too great a price to pay for what you've achieved, is it?" Her smile reflected pleasure as she posed the question.

"A year," he murmured, his eyes echoing her pleasure and brightening with amazement. "Only a year. That's hard to believe," he said. Then he shook his head in wonder and repeated again, "Only one year. Amazing. I will be quite happy to be there again. And leaving Burr now will be no problem. He is merely living out the rest of his life because he still breathes. He has hopes and dreams, still. He schemes and plans, still, much as he always has; but they are only half-hearted now, only to occupy his mind and to give him encouragement and a reason for

facing each new day. And you, Elena . . . now that Stephen Jumel is dead and Eliza has inherited his property and money, she should be content. You should be able to leave her with no difficulty also." He stood in front of Elena and stretched forth his hand. "I have no idea why I feel I should plan our departure, but I seem to sense an obstacle still. Since I'm responsible for both of us being here, if you'll trust me, Elena, I will do my best to guide you back, to overcome whatever that obstacle is. And we might as well delay no longer. Are you prepared to try to return now?"

She took his hand and let him raise her from the seat. "No, Damon, I don't believe I am," she said, looking into his eyes with a puzzled expression. "I don't think I'm ready to return."

"But why, Elena? Why not?"

"How can I tell you? How can I expect you to understand? You've been here such a long, long time and lived through so much. But I'm fascinated by what I'm finding. I enjoy walking down the streets of New York City in the nineteenth century. Yes, they're dirty and filled with garbage and animals and street vendors and overwhelming smells in the summer heat." Here, she anticipated the protest he was about to offer. "And I miss taking a shower, and I miss hot running water and a bathroom stool I can use and flush. I miss electric lights and occasionally I miss an automobile, but there's something marvelous about being able to live through another time in history . . . to actually see life as it was then . . . to be a part of it."

After a moment's thought, she added, "And I must admit that I enjoy being enormously wealthy. I enjoy being surrounded by beautiful and expensive things. I love wearing expensive clothes, and I think it's marvelous to have a house full of servants to do my bidding. I'm afraid I'm enjoying my life as Eliza Jumel far more than you ever enjoyed yours as Aaron Burr. I'm just not ready yet to give it all up, Damon. But you may leave . . . and I think you should. For me, I would like to have a bit more time in this life." Her statement ended with an emphasis of firmness.

"How much more time do you think you want? How much are you asking for?"

"How can I tell you that at this minute? I don't know myself. There will come a time, I'm certain . . . perhaps in a week or two weeks . . . or a month or two months . . . perhaps even a little longer than that. But there will come a time when I feel that the excitement . . . no, that's not a good word for this . . . when the pleasure . . . has gone, and I long to leave here, to return. When that happens, then I'll be ready to go back. But I don't want to force you to remain here any longer. I know how thoroughly ready you must be . . . how eager you must be to be free of this life. I do not lay a claim on you and your life, Damon. I came to help you return to your life."

"Stop it, Elena. That's foolish rambling, and you know it. I couldn't leave Percy, and I can't leave you here, either. When we return, we will do it together." He was equally firm.

"You think so, Damon?" She was not being sarcastic. She really longed to be reassured by him. He stared long and hard at her features, attempting to read her thoughts. It seemed a curious thing for her to ask in such a helpless manner. Yes, Elena was having trouble with the mind of Eliza Jumel. That would bear careful watching.

"Yes, Elena," he said sympathetically, "I do think so. I'll wait for you to tire of playing this game . . . that's what it is, you know, a game. It's rather like play-acting, pretending to be someone else, only it goes one step beyond that because everybody around you is involved with living their lives . . . and you really have no control over the way the life you're acting out goes along. I'll remain until you're ready to return also, and we will see each other often now. Just remember that I am very old, and I can't have many years left to live, but I won't return until you do."

"I'll remember, Damon. But I'm convinced that you could help me from the twentieth century, while I could never help you in the same way."

"Perhaps," he told her. "But I prefer to wait here with you. If anything were to go amiss, my conscience would never rest, and I don't look forward to transferring back through time ever again. When I return to the life of Damon Arons, there I intend to remain."

"Damon, how I have missed you," Elena said, simply.

She embraced him with a fierceness and kissed him with a longing and a passion that had been stored within her many, many months. In his joy of finding her, in his frustrated desire to help her, Damon responded with a like passion, holding her warm body pressed against his as though his desire to return to his own life could be transferred from himself to her. As he held her close to him, his mind was flooded with the thrill he felt as he embraced Percy—or was it Theodosia—or both? But that was long ago.

He clung to Elena as to a lifeline, for that's what she was to him. Yet, there was still the sense of something slightly wrong. He could not sort through his mind to the why of it, but he felt an ominous chill—an icy terror throughout his body. He shivered within her embrace.

"Damon, are you ill?" She placed a gentle hand on his forehead. There was no fever, but deep in his eyes there was a cloudiness which replaced the earlier sparkle.

"What's wrong?" she asked tenderly.

"Elena, I beg you, don't stay here. I'm fearful of what may happen."

"But what can happen?" she asked, incredulous that he could suddenly be so concerned. Her desire was simple enough. It held no danger that she could see. She only wanted a little time to enjoy what she had come upon.

"Do you foresee something that I don't?" she asked. "Do you have some sort of premonition?"

"No, no—I don't see anything, Elena," he told her honestly. "I just sense a fear, an unreasonable fear. I don't even know of what . . . possibly of the death of Burr." Then thoughtfully, he added, "And of me, if I remain here."

"No, Damon, never." She drew him close to her again. "I won't allow that to happen. I promise you that it will only be for a little while, only long enough to enjoy the things I wanted and never acquired in my own life, but have stumbled upon in this one . . . the money . . . notoriety, if not fame. I will tire of it soon, but until then . . . be patient with me a little . . . only a little." Her remarks were a touching plea.

"I will, Elena, but only for a little while," he agreed. Then he turned away from her and walked toward the

door. "Now I must go. This apprehension has taken all the vitality from me. And I will see you as frequently as we can manage. Only, I pray you, don't be too impressed with your life here. It is not yours, you know. It is only borrowed."

"Damon, you must not worry so much," she replied, laughing lightly. "We must think about returning you to the life that you belong to . . . and me with you, of course. Good night, dear Damon. I'm so glad to be with you." She kissed him good-bye fondly.

After he was gone, she stood with her back against the door, wondering about her decision and his uneasiness. Was she being unreasonably selfish, asking to remain long enough to enjoy some of the luxuries before returning to her own life? Surely, it was only that he had been here so long and was anxious to return. There couldn't really be any validity to his fears. There couldn't be any harm in a few weeks delay . . . could there? . . . *Could there?*

As Damon Aarons stepped into Broadway, he turned to look at the Astor Hotel. What could be the harm in humoring Elena's request? Surely, she deserved to enjoy for a little the benefits that the life of Eliza offered her. She could never hope to have any of those pleasures when she returned with him . . . surely, he owed her that much . . . and yet . . . and yet . . . He shivered and drew his coat about him more securely. The weather was not cold, but Damon Aarons, unexplainably felt quite chilled.

Chapter IX

Seated at the head of her long table of Santo Domingo mahogany, with Colonel Burr opposite her and her daughter sitting on her right, her son-in-law to her left, Eliza was very pleased with herself and very content. She was pleased because the dinner had been particularly splendid. The young people were in an especially lighthearted mood, and they had kept a lively conversation going all through the meal. All afternoon Aaron Burr had been wickedly and extravagantly lavish with his flattery. It made her feel almost young and desirable once more.

Nelson was well settled into Burr's law office, and they seemed to be getting along extremely nicely. Although Colonel Burr had other young men in his office, other young lawyers and clerks who were equally anxious to learn from him, he seemed to be particularly taken with Nelson. And being associated with Colonel Burr afforded the opportunity for Nelson to bring him to Mount Stephen when he and Mary made their frequent visits.

Burr seemed to enjoy his evenings with Eliza as she did with him, and more and more he had taken to coming out alone on occasion to spend a leisurely few hours in her company. She thrived on the attention he paid her. Except for her friends among the French colony and those of her literary and Bohemian favorites in New York City, she was still an outcast in the social whirl. No one could deny that she was the wealthiest woman in the entire state, perhaps in all of America.

She had entertained and been received in Paris by Madame la Duchesse de Berry, M. le Comte d'Alzac, Madame la Duchesse de Charot, and Madame la Comtesse Henri Tascher de la Pagerie—but New York was not Paris, and the good matrons of New York society could not forget nor forgive Eliza her illegitimacy nor her unsavory earlier life in spite of her wealth. This snub caused her to wear her money like a badge of honor. She began to enjoy flaunting her wealth in their very noses. And she enjoyed her friendship with the many gifted artists and writers of the city—it gave her a bit of stature to be considered an intimate with the group. She likewise enjoyed the companionship of Colonel Burr. He had an enviable title, despite what other faults might be his. He had been Vice-President of the United States!

It pleased her mightily that he passed up evenings which might have been spent with the leading matrons of New York in order to spend them with her. He played an excellent game of cards and a passable good game of chess. Burr especially liked to challenge Eliza to a game of chess because among the other treasures she had brought back from France was the chessboard and chessmen which had belonged to Napoleon. The chess game was set upon a nest of black lacquer tables. Beneath the tables, rested the very Gobelin tapestry rug which Napoleon had laid beneath his chess table at Malmaison.

"The chessboard and chessmen were designed by His Imperial Majesty himself," Eliza enjoyed telling Burr repeatedly. Burr enjoyed fondling the pieces carved from beautiful old ivory, each one bore the initial "N," and carved on its head was a big cocked hat just like the one worn by Napoleon. Though he had never met him, Burr long admired and envied the little Frenchman because he had been able to accomplish what Burr himself had not—he had been able to establish his own empire. Toying with the ivory kings and pawns, Burr could well imagine himself as Napoleon throned . . . never Napoleon exiled. Eliza helped the illusion of royalty, also, for she enjoyed dressing for an evening of cards or chess with her solitary guest as though she were going to a great ball. She was well aware that she was, at fifty-eight, still quite handsome to look upon and comely of shape, with a definite Con-

tinental flare for wearing clothes . . . a flare which she had learned well in the salons of Paris with her aristocratic friends. Often, she would appear for an evening ablaze with jewels, magnificent and costly.

It was merely a matter of time, she often told herself, merely a matter of time and wealth and ingenuity before society found a convenient way to forget her past and accept her to itself, and of those three things, she was more than well supplied.

"Madame Jumel," spoke Burr from his seat opposite her.

For a moment she blinked her eyes, uncomprehending. Her mind had been full of other thoughts, and she was oblivious to those about her at the table.

"Madame Jumel," he repeated.

This time, she smiled in response. "Forgive me, Mr. Vice-President."—Oh, how she did love that title!—"Forgive me. I fear I had allowed my mind to wander."

"From where did I recall your thoughts?" he asked politely.

"From nowhere in particular, and certainly from nowhere as interesting as your company," she replied with great charm.

"How graciously you state it," Burr remarked.

She smiled in return for the compliment. "My attention is all yours now, Mr. Vice-President," she told him.

"If I should have a rival who can attract your thoughts from me in absentia, I would know it, madame," he said.

Eliza felt a pleasant rosininess spring into her cheeks, and she smiled slyly at her guest. "Truly, you must desist from these pretty speeches, Colonel Burr, or you will completely turn my head about."

"I pray it will be in my direction, madame, for I have a request to ask of you, if you will but grant it."

"I cannot tell until you have asked, dear sir, but if it be within my power, be assured that I shall do so with delight."

"I should like to accompany you on a walk through your garden, dear lady, before the sun has completely deserted the sky. I've not had the pleasure of admiring it since you returned to Mount Stephen, and I am certain that the warm sunny days and gentle spring rains we have

experienced, together have combined to make it a thing of exceptional beauty under your care."

"A beauty it is, most assuredly, but the credit is not mine alone, sir. The good weather and the fine care and knowledge of my excellent gardener have produced a truly lovely array of flowers. I would be most pleased to share them with you." Turning to her daughter, she said, "Children, will you excuse us while we stroll and examine nature's beauty?"

"Mama, will you want us to play whist with you and Colonel Burr when you have returned from your stroll?" the dutiful Mary inquired.

Looking at Burr, who smiled and nodded, Eliza turned again to Mary and replied, "That seems an amiable suggestion, dear. We would enjoy a game of cards with you and Nelson this evening."

Mary ignored the slight frown on Nelson's face as they retired to the octagonal room to await her mother and Colonel Burr.

As they ambled slowly along the carefully manicured paths of Eliza's flower garden, she could not resist fingering here and there a rose, bending to inhale the sweet fragrant odor. The roses of the garden were her favorites, and so they were her pride and joy. Second, would be the purple violets, growing close to the ground. Those, she supposed, she loved because of the ready acceptance she had found among the Napoleonic society when she and Stephen resided in Paris.

There no one knew or even cared that she had been Stephen's mistress for several years. No one knew that she had pretended to be dying and persuaded Stephen to marry her so that she could face death with the great sin on her soul removed. No one knew that she recovered from her seemingly fatal illness quite miraculously within a few days after that ceremony. Stephen took the incident with great good grace and they were married in the Cathedral of Saint Patrick, their bonds sanctified by a Catholic Mass. No one in her Paris either knew or cared. There she was accepted and loved because she was young, beautiful, charming, and wealthy, and she loved Paris in return.

Paris had been Napoleon's city, and the violet had been Napoleon's flower. They all had special appeal for her—

the man, the city, and the flower. The garden was also graced with peonies and irises in pleasant pastel hues, with brilliant colored poppies serving for accent and pristine white daisies sprinkled among the tulips and jonquils, asters, and foxgloves. Later there would be ferns and lilies and summer annuals. But of them all, she loved her roses best. She enjoyed the soft, velvety touch of the petals and the delicate, sweet fragrance. She also loved the fact that if cultivated properly, they would produce an abundance of blooms, spring through fall.

After properly admiring her bountiful flower garden and viewing her very well-tended garden of vegetables and fruits, Aaron drew her to a bench placed alongside the path.

"Although I am a great devotee of flowers, dear lady, and I readily admit that yours are splendid; indeed, I desired most particularly to be with you apart from anyone else," he said impetuously.

"Why, Colonel Burr," she said. "I'm becoming quite spoiled with your pretty compliments, and I shall have to forbid you soon."

"Since we have been together frequently these past months, dear Eliza, it cannot come as a great surprise to you to learn that I esteem your company greatly, not only for your charm and grace and lively wit, but also for your animated spirit and your most abundant physical charms as well."

"You do astonish me, Colonel Burr. I'm not at all certain that I feel it is altogether proper for you to speak to me in such a fashion . . . nor for me to listen to your words." She admonished him lightly. "I certainly shall not encourage you in this pursuit."

"Come, come, my dear Eliza," he answered her persuasively. "I tell you it is altogether right and proper to speak to you the truth, and I have told you only that which is true."

"One can never argue with what is true, sir, but to be truthful is not always proper and to be proper is not necessarily to be truthful," she countered.

"Then allow me to be perfectly properly truthful with you, madame, and in that fashion. I shall plead my case." He rose and stood before her, holding her hand tightly in

his. "What I mean to tell you, Eliza, and I will not be turned aside, is that I offer you my hand, my heart has long been yours."

"I thank you for your tender words, Colonel Burr, but I am still true to the memory of Monsieur Jumel and ever shall be," Eliza replied.

"It is a sentiment which does you much credit, dear Madame Jumel, but do not waste the remaining years in mourning the dead. The living should embrace life to its fullest. There is much fullness in the life which I offer to you," he answered.

"Dear sir, I would not deceive you by saying that your statement comes as a shock to me, but I would be honest and tell you that I am not prepared to answer you at the moment."

"Have you nothing else to say to me, madame, no words of encouragement for my suit?"

"I have none, sir. I had not thought to marry again, and I must weigh the arguments for and against before I make such an irrevocable decision. I would not wish to appear faithless to the memory of dear Stephen."

"But a woman of your charm and beauty . . ." he began, when she interrupted.

"And wealth . . ." she added with a knowing smile.

"Since honesty and truth be the key to our discussion, I cannot argue that your wealth can be overlooked. It is a fact of your life, and a most enticing one, but I value my integrity too greatly to sell it for a mere thirty pieces of silver, madame—or even thirty times thirty pieces of gold. I am no Judas to myself." He spoke with pride, his chin thrust forward, his chest held high.

"Nor am I to myself, Colonel," she remarked. "I do not mean to be hurried into an alliance of any kind until I have given it cautious thought. Not only do I value my integrity and independence, but I, likewise, value my money." There was no doubt that she meant what she said.

"And so do I, madame, and so do I . . . value your integrity and independence, that is," replied Burr with equal emphasis. "For myself, I have never had much money at any one time, and therefore, I can not say I place a great deal of value on it. I have always regarded more highly

my reputation and my good name. I was, after all, the Vice-President of the United States at one time."

"I'm fully aware of your impressive title, Colonel Burr, fully aware," Eliza said. "But I must insist upon having sufficient time to consider my feelings regarding such a step. I am no longer young . . . nor are you . . . and it becomes increasingly difficult as one grows older to change one's ways and to adapt to living in such a way as to please another."

"But consider, dear Eliza. You and I have been most companionable these last several months. There have been no words of dispute passed between us. For my part, it has not only been a simple matter to accommodate you in all matters, for you prove to be a most amiable woman, but a pleasure as well. Can you deny that it has been so on your part?" Burr's remarks had the character of a challenge.

"I yield to you, sir," Eliza admitted, laughing. "I must admit that our friendship has been a great source of comfort and satisfaction to me through the winter . . . and it has not been difficult for us to get along reasonably well."

"Ah ha! Ah ha!" cried Burr, "but it has been more than friendship on my part, madame. Surely you must have perceived the progression of my regard for you. I do pledge that you and you alone are the delight of my heart." He was certain that if his argument proved persuasive enough, she would succumb to his proposal. "Surely, I have been patient in waiting to make this proposal to you, my dear Eliza. I have delayed not through lack of interest or desire, nor because I have been uncertain of my own feelings for you, dear lady, but merely to allow a seemly time to pass since the death of your first husband. It has now been a little more than one year since his demise, and I feel it is not improper for me to ask for, and to expect to receive your pledge to marry as soon as it is practicable."

"I am not a giddy young girl, to be swept off her feet by a promise of undying love and devotion, my dear Colonel Burr. I am flattered by your proposal, I admit that to you readily. I am even intrigued by it. I do not look forward to spending the remainder of my life here in this great mansion alone. Companionship is a strong consideration in

one's advancing age, as you well know. But I must have time, sir. I insist upon it. But let me not discourage you in your hopes, and pray, do continue your frequent and pleasant visits to Mount Stephen. In the meantime, I shall give your proposal of marriage deliberate consideration. When I have resolved in my own heart and mind what is best, I shall so inform you, sir."

"I pray that you will be merciful and not tarry overlong in your decision, madame. My spirit grows impatient."

Smiling a very pleased and self-satisfied smile at her suitor, Eliza stood. "Shall we now challenge the young people to their promised game of whist," she suggested.

"If that be your pleasure, my dear lady, it shall be mine," Burr replied, bending slightly over the hand he still held in his. As he raised it to his lips, he turned the palm up and kissed the inside of her hand. The gesture surprised Eliza and she grew warm with the pleasure of it. It had been a long time, a very long time since there had been an occasion to engage in a flirtation, and she found it surprisingly delightful. There was an unquestionable charm about the man that she found very appealing. She also found his title of Vice-President most enticing. In her mind, she could see her own title written, "Madame Vice-President, Eliza Jumel Burr." That had a pleasant sound, a tempting appeal to it.

A few weeks later, on July 1, 1833, on a pleasant summer's late evening, Aaron Burr arrived unannounced at the mansion with a friend of very long standing, the Reverend Dr. Bogart. This was the first time he had returned to the mansion since he made his proposal, and Eliza began to wonder if she had been too hasty in her refusal; she had not meant to discourage his visits entirely. But now it seemed that not only had he not been entirely discouraged, but he meant to force her into making a decision. Her time for considering her future was abruptly brought to an end. As her butler admitted the two elderly gentlemen into the great hall, Eliza decided she could not face the confrontation she suspected would be forthcoming. She hurried to the stairway, hoping to barricade herself in her bedroom until they decided the pursuit was futile and left. She would leave the task of entertaining them to Mary and Nelson, upon whom she knew she could depend. But

she hesitated a second too long before making her hasty escape. Aaron caught sight of her as she sped across the floor and gave chase. On the staircase, he caught her wrist and held her fast with both hands.

"Come now, my dear Eliza, you would not wish to be rude to your guests. I have praised most highly your lavish hospitality and gentle demeanor to my friend Dr. Bogart. Put aside your perversely coy behavior and agree to be our charming and affable hostess, as you are wont to be," he coaxed as his dark eyes sparkled with mischief.

"Aaron, it is late, and I vow that I am weary from being overmuch occupied this day. My spirit lags and I am in need of rest. I had not prepared to receive guests this evening," she offered in protest but making no effort to remove herself from his hold. "Pray you excuse me this once. Mary will happily serve you a glass of brandy if you care for one before you leave. Another time I will happily receive you, myself," she demurred.

"Not so, madame. I will excuse you no longer. I have waited patiently for you, like any simpering schoolboy. Now I am a man full grown and put aside my boyish shyness. I have come to claim you for my own and will hear no more of your excuses. My comrade this evening is the Reverend Dr. Bogart, an old and beloved friend, who has agreed to marry us on the spot. The ceremony only waits upon your consent."

"No, no, Aaron," she replied, turning her head slightly away from him. "I shall always remain true to the memory of my dear husband, Stephen."

"Yes, so you have said, madame, and so you have been. But in being true to your deceased husband, you are being most unfair to me. I am sorely in need of your comfort and companionship and your love. And to you I offer the same for as long as I shall live. Stephen can give you none of these things, and you can give nothing more to him. I do not intend to deprive you of your memories and I shall honor you the more for the honor you do him in remembering your life shared. I merely beg that you will grant me the privilege of sharing your life remaining. In truth, if you do not, I swear that I shall find mine not worth the living."

She turned her gaze to him and found that his eyes

were no longer dancing with mischief but had turned most serious. She was touched to find his pleading sincere.

"Aaron," she began, then faltered and pleaded, "do not urge me further."

"Madame, I am determined it shall be so," he said in a voice most caressingly mellow.

In that moment she understood fully why women the world over found him totally irresistible. Her indecision dissolved into longing for him and she could not find the voice to protest further.

Aaron raised both her hands to his lips and climbed the step which separated them to whisper into her ear, "Madame, it is late, and the minister is old. Do him a service and consent to our marriage at once. I long to call you 'wife.'"

Eliza felt the blood within her rise as she turned her cheek to receive his kiss. "Only agree to allow me the necessary time to change my garment," she whispered softly, "I would wish to be a radiant bride for you, Aaron."

He gave her gown an appraising look. It was a beautiful shade of brilliant yellow and an extremely flattering design of silk and lace. He found no fault with it. "It is you I wish to wed, Eliza, and I would wed you were you clothed in a tattered beggar's cloak. But since you wish it, I will grant you some few minutes to change your gown. But mind that you do not delay long enough to also change your mind," he admonished her. As she turned to leave him, he drew her back, embracing her firmly about the waist and kissed her passionately on the mouth. Her arms stole about his neck as she returned his kiss with abandon.

When, at last, he released her, she turned to face her daughter, who together with Nelson and Dr. Bogart had stood at a respectful distance apart in the hall and watched the entire scene in amazement. To Mary she called gaily, "Do find Marie and tell her that I am in urgent need of her to change my gown and dress my hair." She swung happily about and began to skip up the stairs. On the landing she stopped and added, "Remember to serve brandy to the gentlemen while you are waiting, and have Rufus fill the house with lighted candles. I would

have it blaze with good cheer tonight, as my heart is ablaze with happiness."

"Yes, Mama," replied Mary as she disappeared in search of Marie and Rufus.

Nelson, Aaron and Dr. Bogart adjourned to the front parlor to savor their brandy and await the arrival of the bride. After a time, Mary returned to join them there, having given instructions to the servants in the kitchen below to prepare a wedding meal and to fill the house with lighted candles and flowers fresh from the garden. She was, herself, a bit awed by the suddenness of the marriage and the frenzy of activity taking place, and she welcomed the small crystal goblet of cherry brandy Nelson offered her with an understanding smile. Mary gazed at Aaron Burr above the rim of her glass and wondered at the thought of him becoming her "stepfather." She supposed that was how she should view him.

Although she was not truly the daughter of Eliza, she had been raised by her and by Stephen and instructed to address them "Mother" and "Father." Only after she was grown up to become a lady, did Eliza inform her that her real mother was Eliza's own sister, who had been quite poor and quick to see the advantages Mary would have if adopted by Eliza and Stephen. Mary knew that her mother's name had been Polly, in truth a half-sister to Eliza, long since dead. She could not have asked for greater love than had been lavished on her by her adopted parents and remembered Stephen with enormous affection. She wondered if this man—about to marry Eliza would provide the same degree of love and esteem given by Stephen through the years. She fervently hoped this would be true for she was jubilant in seeing Eliza so filled with happiness.

At last, Eliza appeared from her room and slowly and stately descended the stairs, her eyes dancing with delight, her face radiant with joy. At the foot of the steps, Aaron took her hand and led her into the front parlor just to the left of the entrance. As she had requested, the room was ablaze with white candles and filled with flowers freshly cut from her garden. Together the bride and groom stood in front of the fireplace to exchange their wedding vows, recited by the Reverend Dr. Bogart. The gown Eliza chose

to wear might have been fashioned for just such an occasion. She was breathtakingly lovely in a pearl satin gown, stiff enough to stand alone. Her hair was dressed to perfection, having been transformed by Marie into a perfect russet-auburn halo for the bride, with each dancing side curl in its place. Her feet were encased in pearl satin slippers foxed with kid.

From a large bouquet in the corner, Mary plucked one single pale luminous rose, almost the perfect shade of Eliza's gown and handed it to her mother with an affectionate hug and kiss. Then she took her stand beside her mother to serve as her witness while Nelson took his place beside the groom. Eliza smiled at the sight of Aaron, who was most handsome and dashing himself. He had come dressed for the occasion, garbed in full evening clothes, which suited him so well that he appeared much younger than his true years.

The bridegroom was seventy-seven and the bride was fifty-eight, but Eliza's heart was light and she made no effort to disguise her happiness. Aaron Burr was more than ever a gallant cavalier and, himself, well satisfied. He looked forward to an easy and contented life. His wife was beautiful, amiable, and extremely wealthy. Eliza looked forward to a lifelong ambition, as well. She was now—in a sense—a titled lady. She was Eliza Bowen Jumel Burr, wife of the former Vice-President, of the United States, Aaron Burr. The very resonance of it pleased her. Life was good, and what matter that he had little money of his own to offer her. He professed a great love for her, which she returned; and she could provide for their luxuries, their travels, their little extravagances. His income from the law practice would provide for their basic needs. Their friendship had been warm and comfortable, easy to cultivate. The life before them promised to be the fulfillment of that nurturing.

Quietly, the servants gathered in the hall outside the door to the sitting room and watched with pleasure and interest their mistress promise to love, honor, and obey her new husband. The Reverend Dr. Bogart, at length, pronounced that they were man and wife together, adding, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." He then proceeded to deliver a short prayer of benediction

and wished them great happiness in their life together. Aaron stepped forward to embrace Eliza and to kiss her a long and resounding kiss. As soon as he released her, Mary stepped forward to hug her mother and to wish her great joy, while Nelson offered the new bridegroom his hearty congratulations. There was much gaiety and happy laughter. Eliza offered her thanks to the clergyman for performing the ceremony. He accepted her thanks graciously and wished her happiness. He did not tell her that this was the second time he had performed the ceremony for his friend, Aaron Burr. He thought it just as well she did not know that fifty years ago, it was he who had joined Theodosia Prevost and Aaron Burr in holy matrimony, a joyous union. He hoped this union proved to be as auspicious.

Eliza and Aaron led their small entourage into the octagonal room at the rear of the house, where Rufus had placed two choice bottles of vintage champagne to chill. While the newlyweds and their guests toasted each other with the excellent wine, Marie and Rufus supervised the rest of the staff in preparing the table in the dining room for the wedding banquet being readied in the kitchen below. Dozens of candles were set to blaze in the room, replacing those which had been burning for the last hour and a half. The silver and the crystal was used lavishly, causing the flames to reflect their brilliance until the entire table seemed to sparkle with light. All the while they worked, the kitchen below buzzed with activity, preparing the sumptuous meal which had been requested. At last, all was in readiness, and Rufus appeared in the doorway of the octagonal room to announce that dinner was ready to be served. Eliza downed the last of her champagne, and grabbing her husband's hand, led the way to the elegant dining room.

She allowed Aaron to seat himself at the head of the table while Rufus seated her at the foot. Reverend Dr. Bogart was on her right, Nelson on her left, and Mary sat beside Nelson on Aaron's right. As the bemused clergyman glanced around the table at the banquet setting, it occurred to him that perhaps the household had not been taken as much by surprise as he had thought. Such a

sumptuous meal would need a good deal of time to prepare, more than an hour or so, but he said nothing.

First, there was a soup, delicately flavored with onions and white wine and garnished with a crust of bread and toasted cheese. It was a dish Eliza had grown passionately fond of in Paris and brought back the recipe. She had been told that it was first concocted by Napoleon's chef when they stopped one evening at a farmhouse where there was little food. The chef made use of the only things the farmer had on hand, onions, white wine, bread and cheese. The results had so pleased Napoleon that he often requested the dish thereafter. It was another of Napoleon's treasures Eliza brought back home with her.

Next, the guests were served a salmon caught fresh that morning, garnished with caper sauce. This was followed by a roast fillet of beef with olives and a roast pheasant filled with a stuffing of herbs and apples and bread, accompanied with a sauce made with champagne. There was also a silver dish filled with fresh green peas from the garden, swimming in sweet butter and sprinkled with finely chopped leaves of mint. There was an especially delicious dish of mushrooms broiled under a thin, delectable crust. And there were platters of piping hot rolls and golden biscuits to be covered with mounds of fresh butter.

For dessert, there was an elegant cream cake and sugared raspberries shimmering in a cut glass bowl. These were followed by coffee and a cherry liqueur or brandy and thin fragile cookies. The dinner was an enormous success and lasted long into the night. Everyone of the guests at the table commented that it was a remarkable triumph considering the fact that Eliza's cook had no advance suspicion that she would be called upon for such an elaborate feast. She was a cook to be treasured, for it had been a most splendid repast.

Eliza smiled graciously and accepted the pretty compliments on behalf of her cook with a gracious nod of her head. She promised to inform the cook first thing in the morning how well satisfied everyone had been with the meal. But Aaron was not satisfied with that himself, and insisted on sending Rufus down to the kitchen immediately to deliver his personal praise for the wedding feast. Eliza merely raised her eyebrows and noted with amusement

how well he was adapting himself to the role of master of the house. But the entire evening had been a great success and she was content. It was now his house, they were now his servants, also; and as long as he treated them with kindness, he could do as it pleased him.

After the brandy was finished, Eliza suggested that they adjourn once more to the large rear drawing room before bidding each other good night. Mary sat at the pianoforte and began to play a wistful tune.

"No, Mary, no," Eliza protested, "Do not play a melancholy air. This night all must be gay and festive. Play a happy tune for us."

Mary sat for a minute, looking at the keyboard, wondering what she might play that would please her mother, when Eliza had a sudden thought.

"Play us a tune that we may dance, Mary," she requested gaily.

As Mary's fingers picked out the air, and her light voice began to softly sing the words, Eliza took Aaron's hand and began to pull him from his seat and coax him to dance with her. Soon, they were happily twirling about the room, laughing together, carefree and lighthearted.

There was one final round of toasts drunk to the happy couple, and it was very late at night when the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Burr bade their guests good night and ascended, at last, to the privacy of their bedroom.

As she stood before him in her blue gauze nightdress, Aaron embraced Eliza with an ardor which caught Eliza by surprise. It did not, however, displease her. Nor was she displeased by the thought that at her age, she was yet capable of arousing such a passion in a gentleman, particularly one as experienced in these matters as her new husband was rumored to have been in his younger days.

As they lay quietly, side by side, in the great fourposter bed, Damon Arons spoke to Elena. "The time to return is now, Elena," he said.

Sitting upright, clutching her nightdress about her throat, she asked, "Tonight? You mean right now, tonight, Damon? Whatever can you be thinking of? We have only just been married."

"No, you know I didn't mean tonight. It doesn't have to

be this minute, but it must be soon—very soon," he insisted.

"But, Damon, doesn't it please you that we are married? Are you sorry about that?"

"No, Elena. I'm not sorry about that. I can't say I regret that part of it. I suppose I've suspected for some time that there would be a day when we were ready to wed. But this is not really you, Elena, and me, Damon, who have married. It is our other two selves," he said quietly, "That is different."

"But that is also the two of us, and no matter how you reason it, in the nineteenth century, we are now married. I know that I'll think of myself as your wife, no matter what century it is," she said, laying her head next to his.

"If that is true, then we should return to our own time and marry as you and me."

"Not yet, Damon. Not yet. Don't rush me, I assure you I will, but I'm not ready to leave here, yet. I'm happy with this life, this house. Don't ask me to leave everything yet, not for good."

"But that has been your argument every time I've brought up the urgency of leaving, Elena. When? When will you be ready? You've been here over a year. How much longer will it be?"

"I can't tell you, Damon, but I know I can't leave yet." They lay together for several minutes, each resenting the stubbornness of the other.

"Aaron?" Eliza's voice came through the darkness.

"Yes," Damon Arons responded.

"Shall we take a honeymoon trip?"

"And leave this house that you love so much?" His remark had a sizable touch of sarcasm.

"Yes, I thought we might go away for a short while, just the two of us, to be alone together," she replied, choosing to ignore his tone.

"Then, of course we shall, my dear, and where would you like us to travel? Would you like to go abroad? Does that appeal to you? It might be interesting to see Rome, Paris, Florence in the nineteenth century. Then we can return to our own lives. It would be worth remaining in this time for a trip like that." Not only would it be an incredible experience for them both, but if they were to go far

enough away from this house, he might have a better chance of persuading Elena to return with him to their own century, not returning at all to the mansion. He had been in this dual life so long, he was growing impatient to leave it as quickly as he could now. Her continued hesitancy was causing him a decided uneasiness. He hoped that the marriage of Aaron and Eliza would provide him the opportunity to persuade Elena of the urgent need to return. Thus far, although it was early, he readily would admit that it did not show great promise. "Does that appeal to you, Elena?" he asked, hopefully.

"Let's not decide tonight, Damon," she replied, as she slipped her arm around his neck. "Let's decide where we'll go in the morning." She pulled him to her on the bed and kissed him with a mouth that told of longing and desire and need. Damon couldn't resist the rising tide of passion within himself. His longing and desire matched hers and his need was as great. In one small flash of guilt, he thought of Percy whom he had loved so overwhelmingly, but this woman was his wife—at least now, here in this life, and this was his wedding night. His marriage bed beckoned and her warm body undulated softly and invitingly against his own. He could not resist and unreservedly surrendered to the wave of passion which embraced them both.

In the morning, after a hearty breakfast, they set forth on a wedding trip, not to Europe, as he had hoped, but to Connecticut. Eliza owned an interest in a toll bridge there, and they decided to include a visit with Burr's nephew, the celebrated artist, John Trumbull. Luggage was piled onto Eliza's best brilliant yellow carriage as she and Aaron climbed inside. Then, with the footman, postilions, and all in place, they rolled grandly along the long gravel driveway as Mary, Nelson, Dr. Bogart, and an assortment of servants shouted after them and waved kerchiefs in farewell. It was not the sort of long and leisurely trip that would take her mind off the house and her life in it, but Damon meant to do what he could to help her understand that her own life as Elena Blakely was preferable to the shared life of Eliza Jumel, over whose actions Elena could not hope to have control. No one realized that fact with more clarity than he himself. Once history had been writ-

ten into the pages of time, it could not be erased and rewritten no matter how great the desire. Eliza Jumel had lived her fantastic life, but now Elena Blakely must have an opportunity to live hers. He hoped that the pastoral town of Hartford, Connecticut, which was to be their primary destination, would prove to be an aid to his cause.

Chapter X

Claire locked the front door to their brownstone house and started down the front steps only to pause as a taxi drove up and stopped in front of her. She watched as the passenger paid the driver his fare and then opened the door to climb out of the car.

"Why, Raymond," she told him in surprise, "I didn't expect to see you this morning. I was just on my way to an appointment."

"I should have kept the cab for you, I'm sorry," he replied.

"No, no. It's not far. I was going to walk anyway," she answered. "Do you want to walk along with me? Something troubling you?"

"Yes, there is," he said. "I really hate to bother you like this, Claire. I know you have your own work, but it's rather important."

"I'd cancel the appointment if I could, but I just don't dare. It's really important. But come along, and we'll talk on the way there."

"It's Dr. Friedrichson, Claire," he began as they started to stroll along the street heading for Third Avenue. "I know that we said two weeks, and only one week has passed, but I'm not certain we're going to be able to wait any longer."

"Why not? What's happened, for heaven's sake?" She wanted to know.

"Dr. Friedrichson's secretary called me at home this

morning. He wants to see me this afternoon. She said it's very important."

"What do you think he wants to see you about? Surely, not Elena?"

"No, I don't think it's exactly that," he answered. "I think that he's going to tell me he's releasing me to return to Egypt."

"So soon? How can he do that? I didn't think you had finished everything here at the institute. Have you?"

"No, not everything," he told her. "But I've finished most of the important things they had lined up for me. There's nothing major that would require me to stay if my Psychic Research Organization insisted I return."

"Well, can't you give them some excuse? Tell them you're ill with amoebic dysentery," She laughed, but was immediately sorry for the remark. "Forgive me, Raymond. That was in bad taste, a sick joke." Unfortunately, she realized that wasn't a particularly appealing remark either. "Really, Raymond, I don't mean to make light of the situation, but it just seems to be that kind of morning for me," she apologized. "There must be some way to persuade them to allow you to stay for a while without revealing the real reason."

"I don't think you understand how things are with my organization, Claire. I'm not at liberty to tell them what I'm going to do. If Dr. Friedrichson has already told them that the bulk of my experiments have been finished, what can I tell them to convince them that I must stay here? Even if I stretch out the few remaining projects, it would take no more than a day or two to finish. I'm afraid we've reached the end of the waiting game, and now the time has come to tell Dr. Friedrichson everything we know about this. I can't leave until they are safely back in this time, Claire. I feel a moral obligation to Elena. And I must give myself time to work with the institute before I leave the country."

"I don't know, Raymond," Claire replied. "I just don't know. I was so in hope that we wouldn't have to face that issue at all."

"Yes, I know you were," Raymond told her sympathetically. "But we need his help . . . his and other members of the institute. Perhaps Dr. Friedrichson will be willing to

help me remain by making a request to my organization. We don't know how long it may take even after we've put it in the hands of the institute."

Every word he said made sense. She knew it. She, also, knew that she had no reason to be distressed. Yet she was. They had asked for two weeks, and he had been willing to go along with that length of time when he thought he would be in the country. A week had passed without the slightest indication of what might be happening to Damon and Elena, and Raymond was being summoned back to his own country. Of course, he would be upset. He had every reason to be . . . and to be worried, as well. "I don't know what to tell you, Raymond. I want them to be able to return on their own, that's all I know. And I can't even give you a really good reason why any longer except that's what they wanted to do." She slowed her step to a halt.

His voice was deep and solemn when he answered. "Yes, I know, Claire, but what you want, or what Sam wants, or I want, or even what Elena or Dr. Aarons may want is no longer the most important thing. If I leave this country and have not revealed what I know to the Institute well in advance of when I must leave, it would cast a very grave suspicion on me when the truth is later discovered. My entire life and all my work would be covered by a cloud of doubt that would be impossible to explain away. Total honesty is indispensable to the work I do because the work itself is so close to fantasy. Not only would it appear that I had left those two people in the past century not caring what happened to them, only what happened to me, but it would also throw the entire burden of the lives of Elena and Dr. Aarons squarely upon you and Sam. Perhaps the two of you could deal with that easily, and I don't mean to imply that you couldn't. I would rather not have to face either of those two problems, and it seems the way to avoid that would be to tell Dr. Friedrichson today just what has happened, no further deception about it."

Raymond didn't want to be cruel, but he did want her to realize the seriousness of the matter as it stood now.

"I never thought about being responsible for them and their welfare, Raymond. I'm sure Sam never did, either. I suppose, like a couple of ostriches, we've been standing

around with our heads buried in the sand, hoping that when we came up for air, the world would be filled with sunshine and roses and all good things, and that Elena and Damon would be standing there before us, hand in hand, healthy and radiant. We would all drink a toast to their fantastic accomplishment and smile prettily for the photographers and then ride off to live happily ever after." She tried to make it sound light and unconcerned, but her face as she looked at him was somber, mirroring Raymond's own worried expression. "But that's not going to happen, is it, Raymond? That's probably not going to happen no matter how long we wait for it or hope for it . . . or even pray for it . . . is it?"

He wished he could tell her it would. He wished he could reassure her that everything would be all right, but he didn't feel that. He had never felt that from the moment Elena had disappeared. He shook his head sadly as he replied, "No, Claire, it doesn't look like that's going to happen . . . no matter how long we wait."

She nodded her head that she understood and knew it wasn't his fault, it wasn't anyone's fault, really.

"Have you tried to go back in time, mentally, Raymond," she asked, "to see what was happening to Elena?"

"No, I haven't. It seemed pointless, Claire. I couldn't reach her. I couldn't communicate with her. I could only watch her, and I wasn't sure that would accomplish anything."

"But if they were on the verge of returning, don't you think you would be able to see that?" she asked.

"I don't really know, Claire. I've only gone back to witness actual historical events. Elena wouldn't fall into that category if she were attempting to return. Only her life as Eliza would be historical."

"But it's worth a try, isn't it, Raymond? If they are in the process of returning, we could let them complete it without any danger to anyone . . . them or you . . . or Sam and me."

"It's possible, Claire, but I'm not going to have time to make any such effort to see her before my appointment with Dr. Friedrichson," he answered.

"Then we'll try it tonight at our house. Just put off telling Dr. Friedrichson for one more day. Come for dinner

tonight, and we'll all be there to see what is happening to Elena and Damon. Oh, Raymond, I don't know why it took me so long to think of it. Of course, it seems the perfect solution." Claire's spirits were reviving rapidly.

"Unfortunately, Claire, I feel that the thing that may be holding Elena back is Elena herself . . . and her reaction to that house. She may not want to return, and without help, there's nothing we can do."

"I can't believe that, Raymond. I think you're just being overly apprehensive. If something's wrong, it must be something else." Again she stopped and studied his face. It was obvious that he was worried, but he had to be mistaken. They continued walking the length of the block before she spoke again.

"No, I think you're wrong, Raymond," she said, shaking her head. "But if you're not, then we'll know, and we'll all agree that there is nothing to do but ask the institute to help them return."

"You've never asked why I don't go back physically to reach them, Claire, but there is a logical reason."

"I'm sure there is, Raymond. You're an extremely logical person. But it is such a dangerous thing that Sam and I would never ask anyone to do it. It would have to be a personal decision. It would have to be your own personal decision without our urging."

"I've given it thought, but if I were to disappear, as Elena and Dr. Aarons have, and not be able to return at all . . . or even for a long period of time, it could create a problem between our two governments," Raymond said, "My country would, undoubtedly, refuse to believe the story you could tell them . . . even your own country probably would. It would be most reasonable to suspect that I had been kidnapped, or possibly killed, and you and Sam would be held responsible. I only hope that's not the reaction when we try to convince the institute what has happened to Elena and Dr. Aarons."

"Please, one more day, Raymond. Just one more day. I don't care what you tell Dr. Friedrichson, just don't explain it today. Sam is locked into a lab today, and I can't get to him. He'll be home this evening, so come over as early as you can. If we must go to the institute, we should plan carefully everything we're going to tell them. We'll

work that out tonight." She touched his arm lightly with her free hand. "Please, Raymond," she said.

As she disappeared through the pale blue door, Raymond turned to the street. Again, it was against his better judgment, but he would postpone telling Dr. Friedrichson if he possibly could. He hailed a taxi and gave directions to the driver. As he watched the city streets pass by, he realized that he, like Claire, was hoping he would suddenly recognize Elena standing on some street corner. He shook the thought from his mind and tried to decide what he would tell Dr. Friedrichson that would neither be a lie nor an explanation, if he were forced into that position.

Dr. Friedrichson was punctual, precise and matter-of-fact. He did not keep people waiting, and he did not like to be kept waiting either. Promptly at one-thirty Raymond was ushered into his office. Dr. Friedrichson rose to greet him and indicated a seat for him opposite the desk.

"I've seen very little of you since your arrival here, Dr. Saundre must apologize for that, but I understand the institute has been keeping you busy with their experiments." Dr. Friedrichson spoke as he resumed his own seat at the large walnut desk between them.

"I hope they are satisfied with the results of the tests," Raymond replied. "Otherwise, it would be a waste of a great deal of time and effort on the part of your staff. They have worked very hard."

"Yes, and so have you, I'm sure," Dr. Friedrichson commented. "They seem to be quite satisfied. I have the results of the tests so far and the remarks of the staff concerning them right here." He indicated a folder on his desk. "I'm ashamed to admit that I haven't been able to study it thoroughly yet. I will, of course, and I intend to do so in the next few days." He leaned forward, his elbows on his desk. I must tell you that everyone here at the institute is impressed with some of your most extraordinary abilities. They are truly astonishing, Dr. Saundre."

Raymond smiled. "Thank you, sir." He wondered if that was all there was to be said. Could it be that simple?

"I suppose you are aware that your own Psychic Research Organization is very anxious to have you return to them," Dr. Friedrichson said.

"I am not surprised to hear it. They agreed to postpone

certain projects until you finished your experiments. I suppose they are growing impatient."

"Actually, if you would like, we could release you immediately—tomorrow, if you wish it. We will have the most vital information by then, the rest will just be to fill out, to complete the report. I expect to be in touch with them before the day is out, should I tell them you are finished here?"

"No . . . no," Raymond objected, perhaps a bit too hastily because Dr. Friedrichson was caught by surprise by his emphatic refusal.

"You wish to stay longer, Dr. Saundre?" he asked.

"I only meant, Dr. Friedrichson, that there is no need to rush on my behalf. I'm willing to devote whatever time you need to this investigation you are making . . . and . . . and I'm certain that the Psychic Research Organization will agree to a few more days if you request it." Raymond felt his explanation was rather awkward.

"I see, well, if you feel no urgency, then, I'll give it more thought," said Dr. Friedrichson.

"Is it Dr. Reynolds from the PRO that you've spoken with?" asked Raymond.

"Yes," replied Dr. Friedrichson.

"Did he indicate to you what projects they were holding for me?"

"No, I assumed they might have been in touch with you about that."

"No, they haven't. I suppose they are waiting for my arrival in Egypt before explaining what they have in mind. I was merely curious to know whether it might be archeological—or criminal. But either way, it could be a project which required great secrecy."

"Yes, quite possible." Dr. Friedrichson said pleasantly. "It's the same with all psychical research. It's bad enough to be told that you are insane after the research is finished, let alone being told that you are insane to even start it. It tends to shatter your confidence in your own ability."

"Yes, indeed it does," Saundre agreed.

"Let's say, then, that unless your immediate return is required, that you will be able to leave the end of the week."

"I will make it a point to see you and say good-bye be-

fore I go." Raymond rose and turned toward the door. The interview had been considerably easier than he expected and he was anxious to be out of the office where he could heave a sigh of relief.

"There is one more thing, Dr. Saundre," said Dr. Friedrichson, rising from his desk and crossing the room.

"Yes, what is that?"

"Have you seen Elena Blakely recently?"

There it was. He had not been wrong in fearing this interview after all.

"Why . . . no . . . I haven't seen her in the last week . . . In fact, we haven't worked together since I arrived at the Institute. Why did you ask?" All of what he said was true, but Raymond could feel the perspiration heavy about his chest. Did Friedrichson suspect that something was wrong?

"She's been ill this last week—dysentery, I believe," Dr. Friedrichson said almost too casually.

"Yes, I heard that was the case," Raymond agreed.

"But you haven't stopped by her apartment to see her?"

"No . . . no, I've been quite busy with other things," Saundre replied.

"I see. The reason I asked is that when I tried to call her yesterday afternoon and again this morning, there was no answer on her telephone. I wondered why."

"I . . . I have no idea." Raymond swallowed before he could speak again. Why was he reluctant to tell Dr. Friedrichson now that he had a perfect opportunity. Friedrichson seemed to be inviting him to explain. "I can't imagine why she doesn't answer, but there could be any number of reasons, I'm sure. Maybe she had gone to see her doctor—or was sleeping." Damn Claire and Sam. The perfect opportunity was being handed to him, and he couldn't bring himself to take it.

"Yes, that's possible . . . possible. I just wondered how she was doing. It's too bad about that dysentery. It can be very uncomfortable. Still it's not like her to go so long without phoning someone here at the institute, even when she's ill. You know, it's the first time that's happened in the ten years she has been with us."

"I'm sure you'll hear from her as soon as she's well enough, Dr. Friedrichson," said Raymond, eager to leave.

"I may drop around there this evening, if I can manage

it. I would hate to think of her growing worse without any of us making an effort to help," said Friedrichson.

"I could stop by her place later today, if you would like me to. I should anyway, I imagine. That would save you the evening," Saundre suggested.

"Well . . ." Friedrichson hesitated.

"I have nothing important planned for this evening, and I would be happy to do it," Saundre insisted.

"If you don't mind, I would appreciate it, Dr. Saundre," Friedrichson said. "Stop by in the morning and let me know how she is, will you?"

Saundre grasped his hand and shook it hard in farewell. "Yes, tomorrow I'll tell you how she is," he said with what he hoped was confidence in his voice.

His smile was rather weak and sickly as he passed Bernice's desk on his way back to his own small temporary office. Reaching for his daily assignment sheet, he found there was only one test scheduled for that afternoon. It would be easy enough to cancel, and he didn't feel up to the mental strain, probably wouldn't function well. He didn't feel like being calm and cooperative, but there was no excuse he could give without arousing suspicion at this moment.

The test did not go well. The results were unsatisfactory. Saundre developed a headache, and the afternoon seemed interminably long.

By the time he arrived at the Whites' brownstone, he was greatly distressed and very irritable. For some reason, he felt that he was under suspicion at the institute. Dr. Friedrichson seemed to be implying that he had some knowledge of Elena that he wasn't disclosing. He couldn't tell what Dr. Friedrichson thought he might be guilty of, but he didn't like it. The time had come. No matter what either Sam or Claire thought, did, or said, the time had arrived for him to explain everything he knew to Dr. Friedrichson. That was fine, and that was resolved in his mind. The difficult part was that he was equally determined to persuade both Sam and Claire to corroborate his story. Taking a deep breath, he climbed the steps to the house and determinedly rang the doorbell. Claire greeted him pleasantly as he entered.

"Claire, I can't put it off any longer. I've got to tell them," he blurted out once inside the front hall.

Claire raised a finger to her lips. "Shhhhhh, not now," she cautioned.

"Yes, now. My mind is made up this time. I won't be talked out of it again. You don't know what happened this afternoon," he was saying as she continued to try to quiet him and lead him into the living room. "I think Dr. Friedrichson suspects something—"

Suddenly, Raymond saw why Claire had been trying to quiet him. There, seated in the living room, were two people he had never met before.

"Raymond, this is an associate of Sam's, Mr. Reinagle, and this is his daughter, Anne. This is Dr. Raymond Saundre."

"How do you do," Saundre said aloud, but to himself he said, oh, damn! The evening was going to be as trying as the rest of the day had been. However, there was nothing to do but stick it out. They had to agree on exactly how to go about telling Dr. Friedrichson before he left them, and that couldn't be done as long as Dr. Reinagle and his daughter were there. He couldn't tell about Dr. Reinagle, but Anne seemed to be prepared to spend the rest of the night discussing interior design with Claire. Saundre could do nothing but wait and worry.

Chapter XI

Eliza sat hunched over her desk, poring over her several account books. She could hardly believe what the figures were telling her. Yes, she had long known that Aaron was inclined to be unusually loose with money, even careless at times; and she was aware that he continually drew on her account, but to the extent that her figures now revealed had been beyond her most unbridled suspicion. Why, the man was a scoundrel, a reprobate, a spendthrift, totally reckless and imprudent with her money, treating her wealth as though it were for him and him alone to dispense with carefree abandon on every little whim. She must put a stop to this, and immediately!

Eliza began to pace the room, then she stopped, poured herself a glass of brandy and resumed pacing again, sipping at it lightly. An hour passed as Eliza paced, sipped her brandy, paced some more, poured herself a second glass and waited for her errant husband. By the time she poured herself a third glass, her fury was beginning to boil into a rage. The moment she heard the sound of his boots on the front porch, she glanced at the clock. It was barely lacking of one o'clock in the morning—hardly a suitable hour for a decent man to be arriving home to his wife.

Spying her standing in the doorway to the study, Aaron raised his arms and said, "Ah, my dear wife, how good of you to wait up for me. I must confess it is an unexpected pleasure."

He kissed her cheek, cold, stiff, and unyielding, then drew back to gaze suspiciously at her.

"My dear husband," replied Eliza in a voice fairly dripping icicles. "Be good enough to come into the study with me," she invited, leading the way.

"Of course, my dear," he answered, following cheerfully.

Eliza thrust the open books in front of him. "Look at these, I charge you. Sir, you are not only extravagant but wastefully so. This one bill for food and drink alone, sent from the Astor House is disgraceful."

"You must understand, Eliza, that I have many friends whom I am, on occasion, obliged to entertain. Surely, you would not want the husband of Madame Eliza Jumel Burr to spend his time in hiding or in pleading poverty," he said.

"Surely, I do not want the husband of Madame Eliza Jumel Burr running through her money to the point of leaving her a penniless pauper. That, sir, is precisely what you are about. You have most intemperately dispensed with thirteen thousand dollars of my money—thirteen thousand dollars—mind you—in the few short months of our marriage. I can ill afford to be married to you. But, I warn you, Aaron, this is to stop this very night."

Burr continued to smile patronizingly at his wife, which only added to her furious displeasure. He gave not the slightest sign of remorse for what he had done.

"Madame, I would have you know that you now have a master; and henceforth, I will handle your money for you," he told her in a voice of calm, firm authority. "I will tolerate no more display of temper on your part. It is unseemly in a lady who is my wife."

Burr was sure of his ground. He knew his law, and he, if not she, was well aware that under the law, what belonged to his wife was his rightful possession to dispose of as he saw fit. There was no recourse for her, nothing she could do to prevent it.

In amazement, Eliza sank to a chair. She saw her marriage in its true perspective. She had been dazzled by the thought of his title—Vice-President. What did it matter if there should be the word "former" in front of it, she could conveniently drop that with no pangs of conscience. And

he? He had not been dazzled by her beauty or desirability, as she assumed. He had been dazzled by her *money*. And it appeared that he had got the best of the bargain. Very quickly she found that the title of "Madame Vice-President" did not open the closed doors of society for her. In fact, there was no change at all in her social standing. But Burr had suddenly come upon all the wealth he could spend. For him their marriage was an open sesame to an ever-flowing river of gold. And worst of all, there appeared to be nothing—not a single thing she could do to prevent his spending whatever he pleased. But she would find a way, she vowed. She would find a way and soon. Her possessions meant a great deal to her, and they had not been acquired easily. She did not intend to see them slip away easily, either.

"You, sir, are a scoundrel," she told him angrily. "I will not tolerate the careless manner in which you are running through my fortune. I warn you, Colonel Burr. I will stand for it no longer."

"Do not plague me further, Madame Burr. I shall spend our money as I best see fit and as it so pleases me. Now, let us cease this discussion. I am tired."

"Tomorrow I shall send word to the Astor House that they are to allow you no more bills of expense for your meals," she said. "I shall refuse to pay them. We shall see how long they will allow you to entertain your friends there."

"Then I must draw directly from our bank, madame. My debts need be honored."

"Not by me, sir," Eliza insisted.

"Then by me, madame."

"From your own pocket, I tell you. They shall not be paid at my expense. In addition, I shall inform the bank that they will henceforth honor a draft on my money drawn by none other than myself."

"Ha, ha, a very fine ruse, madame my wife, but it will serve no purpose. I am the better lawyer of the two of us. It would not be legal for the bank to deny me that money which is mine by right of marriage. I have you there."

"Leave this house. You are not fit to waste my breath upon, and I shall waste no more on you then. It is impos-

sible to deal with you. I shall throw you back into the gutter where I found you."

"I would take care, lady, when I speak of the gutter and those who might dwell there," he replied sarcastically. "I recall a young lady, very favorable to look upon, I admit, who began her life among the residents of the gutter. Though she has risen far from her earlier life, she has never been able to live down that very humble and distasteful beginning. 'Gutter' is not a word we should bandy about, my dear, if you have any wits about you or any memory."

Burr's insinuation hit its mark. The one tender spot in Eliza's makeup was her unsavory beginning. She had struggled hard to free herself from her life as a "woman-of-the-streets." That's what she had been in her early teens before she graduated to become Stephen's mistress. She never spoke of that past life and never allowed anyone else to speak to her about it. She told no one that her mother had also been a "woman-of-the-streets" who had several children born without benefit of a husband. But it was the only way her mother could earn food for their mouths.

She had no family, no education, no skills. Eliza invented fanciful tales to tell about her birth and early life, and Stephen had never questioned them. But there was no way to hide the path by which she herself had risen to become, most probably, the wealthiest woman in America. Her love of money had sprung naturally from her fear of being poor once more, from memories of what her past life had been. She did not intend that ever to happen, no matter what she had to do to protect herself.

"Get out of my sight, sir. No one is allowed to speak to me of such matters, certainly not such a libertine as yourself." She shouted, and reached for the nearest object, which turned out to be her wine glass. She threw it at him with all the force she could muster.

Ducking expertly, Burr smiled and said, "Libertine, perhaps, madame, but I willingly confess that I have my human failings, one of them being a fondness for money."

"Get out. Get out of my sight. Get out of my house. Get out." She rushed at him, flailing him with both fists, shouting at the top of her voice.

Burr covered his head with both arms. Being an old military man, he realized it was time to stage a strategic retreat, and he turned and unceremoniously ran to the stairs. On the third step, he stopped to face her, standing at the foot of the steps.

"It is late, and I am tired, Madame Burr. I shall not leave this house as you requested. I intend to sleep in my own room." He spoke with as much dignity as he could manage.

"No. I forbid it. You shall not, I say. Get out. Nothing more will you take from me—nothing." She screamed the words as she rushed up the stairs after him.

"Oh, do stop your screaming, Eliza. You sound like a fishwife, and my ears are aching from the onslaught." He tried to make himself heard over her din. "Be quiet, madame," he shouted.

"No, I will not be quiet. I will not be ordered about in my own house. You shut up, sir. I demand it."

"Give me peace, madame, give me peace. Go to bed. Go to sleep. I wish to do likewise. It is late and I am too tired to continue."

Eliza grasped at the new thought. "Yes. It is late. It is very late, and where have you been until this hour? Why were you out throwing my money to every wind when you should have been at home to keep me company?" She threw the accusation at him.

"I was in the company of some friends, madame. It is my right to amuse myself with the comradeship of other gentlemen." Burr, standing at the door of his room, added, "That does not concern you; now go to bed and let me be."

"Gentlemen. What gentlemen? How many gentlemen . . . and how many ladies? Eh? Can you deny it? Can you? I daresay you buy them their lady friends with my money as well as their drinks."

"Madame, I tell you, go to bed." Burr slammed the door of his room and clicked the key in the lock. For a few minutes, Eliza stood staring after him. The effrontery of the man! Never in her life—well, never since she had become Madame Jumel, had anyone dared lock a door in her face. The audacity of the man was more than she could tolerate. She began to beat on the door with her fists

and to kick at it with her feet. The kicking, however, only increased her anger for the velvet shoes she wore offered little protection to her toes and they hurt from the force of the kicking.

"Open this door, I tell you. Open it. Open it, I say." She hammered away in vain. Not a sound was heard in response from the opposite side of the closing. Burr, in his insufferably superior manner, was ignoring her. He solemnly pulled off his coat and placed it on the chair. As best he could, he closed his ears to the clamor and proceeded to ready himself for bed.

At length, tired and defeated, she ceased her attack on the door and turned to her own room. She, too, locked her door and began to prepare for bed. In her mind, she attempted to rationally appraise her situation, between spurts of trying to devise all manner of punishments for the errant and profligate Mr. Burr. She would teach him that she was not to be trifled with—neither her money nor her affections would she allow to be flaunted without reprisal. She wondered if she might have made a grievous mistake to marry this man. Why had she been unable to foresee these problems before she agreed to the wedding? It was too late to repent that act now, however, and she would find some way to bring him to submission before every tongue in the city began to wag over his treatment of her. She would not tolerate being made a public joke any more than she would tolerate being made a pauper.

"How different he is from Stephen," she sighed as she pulled her yellow silken nightdress over her head and tied a bow at her throat. She did not mean to compare them, but at the moment, it seemed impossible not to. Stephen had been so anxious to please her, and Burr seemed anxious to please no one but himself.

As she climbed into the big fourposter, she heard a slight knocking at the door—or was it the brush of a branch at the window? She raised her head from the pillow, the better to make out the noise. In a minute, there it was again. It sounded like it came from the door, but who would be wandering about the house at this hour of the night? Slowly, she drew the covers aside and reached for her waiting slippers beside the bed. Carefully and stealthily, she made her way to the locked door. Standing